

Capitalism and Nature in South Africa:  
Racial Dispossession, Liberation Ideology and Ecological Crisis

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

University of Cape Town

10 March 2017

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## **Declaration**

I, Donna Andrews, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work and has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree to any other university. I have duly referenced and acknowledged all the consulted and quoted published and unpublished material and online publications.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is an historical examination of policy and discourse as it impacts on ecological questions in South Africa, with a focus on land, mining and fishing. It shows how ecological issues are embedded in relations of class, race and gender. It argues that relation of nature and society and social relations form each other historically. Specifically, it makes visible how apparently progressive ideas to overcome the legacy of apartheid have served to perpetuate the ecological crisis after the end of apartheid. That is, although liberation ideology aims to overcome irrational and harmful forms of domination, current strategies of overcoming racial dispossession on the basis of capitalism rely on increasing and unbridled exploitation of natural resources. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of political perspectives and agency responding to the ecological crisis in South Africa today. It provides a survey of government, activist and community initiatives and assesses their capacity to help create a new relationship of nature and society, as the basis for a new society.

Key words: ecological crisis; capitalism; land, mining and fishing; South Africa.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ACB	African Centre for Biodiversity
AIDC	Alternative Information and Development Centre
AMCU	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
AMI	Alternative Mining Indaba
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Convention of the Parties
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSAAWU	Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EEZ	Economic Exporting Zones
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GM	Genetically Modified
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
GPO	Global Partnership for Oceans
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
I&J	Irvin and Johnston
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITQs	Individual Transferable Quotas
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal

LPM	Landless Peoples Movement
LRAD	Land for Agricultural Development
M&G	Mail & Guardian
MACU	Mining Affected Communities
MACUA	Mining Affected Communities United in Action
MBIs	Market-Based Instruments
MDB	Minerals Development Bill
MEC	Minerals-Energy Complex
MECA	Mining-Environment-Community Alliance
MEJCON-SA	Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa
MLRA	Marine Living Resources Act
MMSD	Minerals Mining and Sustainable Development
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
MPRDA	Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra
NDP	National Development Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NEMO	National Environmental Management of the Oceans
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NGP	New Growth Path
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAEO	South African Environmental Outlook
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SASSI	South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative
SIMS	State Intervention in the Mining Sector
SLAG	Settlement and Land Acquisition Grant
TAC	Total Allocation Catch
TCOE	Trust for Community Outreach and Education
TNCs	Transnational Corporations

UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
UNCLOS	United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WB	World Bank
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFFP	World Forum of Fisher Peoples
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand
WoMin	Women and Mining
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WSWB	Willing Seller, Willing Buyer
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
WWII	World War II

## **Preface**

This work is an academic dissertation, but also the continuation, in a different form, of activist thought and practice. By outlining the background to the writing of the dissertation, I hope to situate its aims and character more broadly, and make them more intelligible to the reader. I will describe that background as three (sometimes overlapping) moments in my own development.

First, this dissertation draws on the experience of working with rural small-scale women farmers between 2007 and 2013, through HEKS/EPER Swiss Church Aid. Over the six years with HEKS, I supported and worked closely with Itireleng Development and Education Trust and Mopani Farmers Association in Limpopo as well as Farmer Support Group based in Pietermaritzburg and five rural community organisations in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). From 2008 onwards, many of these farmers shifted towards agro-ecological farming or in some instances, never farmed using commercial methods. Throughout this period, the small-scale farmers raised concerns regarding access to land, water, rainfall challenges and climate change that were adversely affecting their livelihoods and household food sovereignty.

A few of the small-scale farmers associations approached HEKS to assist with climate mitigation and adaptation plans. We helped with these plans, but I was very wary of the effect of these interventions. These plans appeared somewhat futile to me. Specifically because mining extraction continued unabated in close proximity to these small-scale farms and rural communities. These particular interventions by small-scale farmers would have very limited impact on the huge carbon footprint and ecological degradation such as loss in biodiversity, soil, air and water pollution caused by mining in these areas.

I found myself struggling to come to terms with the political demands (title deeds for land, fertiliser and pesticide, corporate social responsibility from mining companies, community shares in mining companies, electrification and roads, fishing quotas etc.) being made by some of these communities. They seemed divergent from how people lived with nature. Over time, I came to see that these demands were, in part, a response to how policy was framed by the state, as well as how non-governmental organisations fostered particular responses to these policies.

The Marikana Massacre of 2012 and the five month strike that followed in 2014; the Western Cape farm workers' uprising in 2012 and their strike in 2013 that was inspired by the Marikana demands; and the Land Act centenary of 2013 were significant political events and processes. These processes held my attention because workers on the mines and on the farms



were not convinced by the rhetoric of their employers or government officials and sacrificed their lives and livelihoods in the pursuit of what they saw as just demands. This coupled with my experience of small-scale farmers and rural communities and their demands raised, shaped my focus and inspired the decision to embark upon this dissertation.

Second, I draw on my involvement in debates on climate change and ecological questions, often in the global forums in which these issues are addressed. This overlaps with parts of same period described above in the first moment. In particular, during participating in the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2011 and the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP 17) parallel peoples' events in Durban, South Africa, that same year, I became extremely frustrated by the nature of the climate change discussions. I was discouraged by what I perceived as similar engagements on Third World debt policy stalemates in the late 1990s and the WTO trade and trade-related issues of the 2000s. I was active for many years in debt and trade policy debates and processes through Jubilee South, Southern African People's Solidarity Network and Alternative Information and Development Centre. I was looking for the transition from "another world is possible" to "another world is necessary" that took into account the aspirations, limitations and insights from previous struggles I was part of.

My perception of the national climate justice and energy democracy campaigns was based on what I gleaned from attending various meetings, seminars, dinners, discussions and debates over the period 2009 to 2012. I was sympathetic to the reasons for engaging, critiquing and debunking the limitations of carbon-trading or lobbying governments on the COP negotiating. I thought however that they were limiting and time consuming. I found *A million climate jobs* campaign equally restrictive. I was not drawn to the Rights to Mother Earth campaign in South Africa, the months before COP17. It felt disconnected from working class people's organisation and remote from the discussions taking place in rural land based movements in South Africa. Between September 2004 and November 2005, I engaged in weekly discussion at International Institute for Social Studies, in The Hague, with students from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. In 2006 I lived in Peru and then Bolivia, so understood the origins and merits of such a campaign, which arose out of mass-based indigenous impulses. But Bolivia was not South Africa.

Concerns about climate change found many points of convergence, which was unlike the anti-Third World debt campaign in 2000 or the anti-World Trade Organisation (WTO) period of 1999 – 2004, where agreements by governments were hard to come by. On a broad level, at least since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, there has been global consensus that ecological

problems need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. There was however consistent failure to agree on how to do so. I started to read analyses that sought to offer an explanation for this failure. So began this journey in May 2013 into the literature on the ecological crisis.

Third, reading Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* in 2013 was transformative. It may have been accidental that Merchant's work served as a catalyst for re-orienting my thought, and it may not have had the same effect if I was not ready for it. But, her work offered an important vantage point from which I was able to understand ecological issues not as a single process but rather as part of a complex and multi-dimensional historical process, which is deeply connected to social relations. More so, without essentialism or dogmatism, Merchant made the interconnectedness between people and nature compelling and concrete for me. This was a critical moment as it made me aware of my own values that I attributed to nature. It allowed me to turn everything upside down and understand the complex roots of the problem and connect it to broader processes in South Africa. This allowed for more authentic local responses, which resisted one-size-fit-all analysis.

Merchant's chapter on *Farm, Fen and Forest* inspired, in part, my substantive chapters on land, mining and fishing. These specific areas were central to the process of dispossession in South Africa. They are critical areas of redress that the liberation ideology spun itself around since its inception, hence this made it possible to trace the development of its ideas historically. Each area requires rethinking given the ecological crisis and had social movements open to a transformative ecological discourse. I had some familiarity with some of the organisations working in this area due to my experience since 1999 from an activist and political economy perspective, and was in solidarity with the struggles they waged.

In summary, the period between my first encounter with ecological questions—at an activist youth camp in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1997—and my present, daily engagement with these questions, has been transformative. At that time, I had little patience for European youth activists easily likening “save the whale” to “save the Third World.” I saw their ecological questions as trivial in comparison with the social and economic structural concerns in democratic South Africa. It felt completely disconnected from my childhood reality of apartheid racism. I carried to Copenhagen many inherited assumptions about nature and society, and a particular analysis of capitalism and its inherent features of racism and sexism. Seeing how deeply seated these assumptions are within capitalist conceptions of nature and unearthing how rooted they were in the South African society, have been critical in

understanding the blind spots of ecological discourse in the country since the end of apartheid. This process has also been influenced by my daily experience, the organisations I was part of building and those with which I am in solidarity. My overall change in perspective, reading for this dissertation, and understanding the current struggles being waged against nature's destruction, made it clear to me that another world is necessary. This can only be achieved with an understanding that another nature is possible and exists. It is being defended and fought for in various communities, organisations and growing movements across the country and the world. This whole process has re-shaped my ideas and understanding of the relationship between society and nature and how I now engage and contribute as an activist.

I accrued numerous intellectual and material debts over the period of this dissertation. My dissertation would not have been possible without the contribution of many people. Andrew Nash facilitated my immersion and journey into the politics of the ecological crisis. His incisive and steadfast guidance, rich discussions, suggestions with regards to various chapters, supervision and encouragement to understand the text as part of a larger whole, have been invaluable. He has been a constant example.

I sought the advice, support, commentary, encouragement, generosity and example of numerous friends, comrades and colleagues at different moments. Cherrel Africa, Alejandro Bendana, Daniel Chavez, Jennifer Chiriga, Fiona Dove, Moenieba Isaacs, Suraya Jawoodien, Crystal Orderson, Lauren Paremoer, Moemba Marimba, Lenore Longwe, Jasmin Noordien, Suzall Timm, Jennifer Stephens and Fiona Wilson, to mention only a few, have always been a phone call away and ready to listen. Shanaaz Soeker and Carohn Cornell always sent perfectly timed messages that were reassuring. My sisters from the Rita Edwards Feminist Collective kept everything in perspective and helped me fully understand how acts of solidarity are transformative and emancipatory.

My family have been keen travellers on this dissertation journey. My mother Mercia was always a considerate listener and ensured a readily available book account. Importantly, it is through her work as a land activist that I saw many of the ideas as they evolved in this dissertation, take root in organisational form. Brian gave me the space to disagree and made it possible to visit several mining communities and mines in Witbank and Marikana. My brother Robert discussed and debated all things fish and oceans with me. My sisters Alex and Kayla kept me apprised of "Rhodes Must Fall" and "Fees Must Fall" and were relentless in their

discussion of racism and sexism. My brother Joel took care of 3 St. Francis Road, freeing me of those family concerns. My dad Leslie was always there. My partner Glynn made my “sabbatical” infrastructure possible. He has been unconditional, patient and the primary observer during chapter revisions. My family in Johannesburg: Camalita, Cheryl and Graeme have been a comfort to have nearby and a wonderful reminder that I am the grand-daughter of amazing women, Cynthia Sophia Hendricks and Cornelia Isabelle Carolus. Our Seth and Yanah turned four the year of submission and were oblivious to it all.

I am grateful to Lungisile Ntsebeza and Desiree Lewis who did not hesitate to act as my referees for National Research Fund (NRF) funding at the start of this process. This, together with University of Cape Town (UCT) merit awards made it possible to study full time. A special thanks to the UCT trio that helped me: Wahieda Gajjar, Bongiwe Ndamane and the late Olivia Barron.

Lewis offered me a home in 2017 in the Food Politics and Cultures Project at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), saw the strength of my approach and invited me to be part of a team again. I am grateful to Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA); People’s Dialogue; Feminist Table; Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT); WoMin (Women and Mining); and ACB (African Centre for Biodiversity) for always inviting me to share my ideas, welcoming me and asking tough questions.

Lastly, I owe a debt of gratitude to ITHEKO running club and my many running compadres especially those of the Two Oceans, who have come to my aid throughout this period—they have taught me that there is no distance or hill that cannot be covered. They helped show me that although it can be accomplished as a solo act, it is far richer and more rewarding when done in solidarity with the road, the supporters and fellow runners. It is with slow and steady pace that one is able to get onto UCT greens and cross the final line.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Dissertation Focus**

This dissertation examines the politics of the ecological crisis from the perspective of an historian of political thought. It sets out to track inherited ideas, assumptions and conceptions of the relationship between society and nature in South Africa, which were often first formed during the Scientific Revolution and have since become integral to global capitalism. It does so, by focusing on the politics of land, mining and fishing in South Africa within its broader historical context.

More specifically, this dissertation traces how the legacy and experience of racial dispossession and the ideology of national liberation have shaped ecological discourse in South Africa, and offers an historical examination of the policies and discourse on land, mining and fishing as they impact ecological questions in South Africa. It shows that without making visible the inherited ideas that inform apparently progressive ideas aimed at overcoming the legacy of apartheid, the current ecological discourse risks entrenching conceptions of nature that will exacerbate the ecological crisis. The dissertation concludes that to address the ecological crisis, new social relations need to be imagined and created. This however, is not possible without reconceiving our relationship with nature.

In the sections that follow, this chapter outlines the dissertation research questions and how the dissertation intends to approach these questions. It broadly sketches three contending approaches to the ecological crisis, so as to situate the approach this dissertation seeks to advance.

Key in this chapter, and those on land, mining and fishing, is to show how conceptions of nature come to change over time and the ramifications thereof upon the relationship between society and nature. The chapter clarifies why ecological discourse is part of the history of political thought as well as how it is connected to historical change. In doing so, it explains why ecological discourse must be seen as part of a broader complex process taking place in South Africa.

Having sought to lay a foundation of how inter-related political, economic, cultural, social and ecological changes affect and get affected by the conception of nature, the remaining sections of the chapter schematically map key processes of the transition from apartheid to democracy which affect the natural environment. The



section that follows shows, by way of example, how ideas affect the natural environment and are connected to larger processes in South Africa. In doing so, it illustrates how the approach and method deployed in this dissertation intends to unmask the politics of the ecological crisis and ecological discourse in South Africa. The last section of the chapter outlines the structure of the dissertation.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The dissertation is concerned to clarify the following questions with the view to examine the historical, interrelated and unfolding changes which shape ecological discourse in South Africa:

- (i) What is the political character of the ecological discourse since the end of apartheid and the political ideas, assumptions and arguments that reveal themselves?
- (ii) How are those political ideas formed by the capitalist conception of nature generally and in the specific context of South Africa?
- (iii) How are changes in the ecological discourse in South Africa connected to the character of post-apartheid society?
- (iv) Can historical accounts of interrelated social, economic and environmental change in a context such as the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century provide a framework for understanding the ecological crisis in South Africa today?

## **1.3 Contending approaches to the ecological crisis**

The ecological crisis is a broad subject of enquiry. It cuts across several disciplines and there are substantial and rapidly growing bodies of literature dealing with it. The section below is necessarily broad, inexhaustive and does not seek to fully represent the nuances and features of the literature in detail. Instead, the discussion aims to highlight a sample of some contending responses to the ecological crisis, which can be identified in academic, governmental and non-governmental literature. This is done so as to situate the approach my dissertation uses.

John Bellamy Foster puts forward that the types of response to the current ecological crisis “can be divided into two main approaches.”<sup>1</sup> One approach, according to him, is reflected through ecological modernisation, which seeks to draw on technology innovation and “remains within the main ‘possessive-individualist’ assumptions of the current social order.”<sup>2</sup> The other approach, he argues “emphasizes the need to transform the human relation to nature and the constitution of society at its roots.”<sup>3</sup> I describe below, three of the better-known responses or subsections which fall within Foster’s two main approaches.

First, is a body of literature that documents the state of ecological crisis, arguing that there is a crisis and that it requires a commensurate response.<sup>4</sup> The literature describes in detail the degree of deterioration of the environment in specific areas – soil depletion, water scarcity, air pollution, plant and animal species extinction, disease and illness, housing and slums, waste and landfills, etc., and most prominently, climate change and greenhouse emissions. These areas are studied from numerous disciplinary perspectives – environmental studies, natural sciences, social studies, conservation studies, security studies, urban geography and so on. For these single issues and problems to make sense, they need to be linked to a larger whole – for instance, the processes of industrialisation – hence illustrating the connection to the larger ecological crisis and what the results would be with a given problem if this larger issue continued unchanged. On a global scale, Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth* is one well-known recent example of this approach.<sup>5</sup> In South Africa, Leonie Joubert’s *Scorched: South Africa’s Changing Climate* and *Boiling Point: People in a Changing Climate* give powerful accounts of the ecological crisis in South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Second, are proposed models of ecological sustainability and a harmonious future. These proposals focus on a diagnosis of the current ills and offer ways to live within the natural resource limits so as to avert ecological destruction for future generations. Proposals vary from governments, non-governmental organisations

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<sup>1</sup> John Bellamy Foster, *The Ecological Revolution: Making Peace with the Planet* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Foster, *Ecological Revolution*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), vii. Princen notes that over the past few decades huge amounts of resources have been spent so as to “document the state of the environment.”

<sup>5</sup> Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Leonie Joubert, *Scorched: South Africa’s Changing Climate* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006); *Boiling Point: People in a Changing Climate* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008).

(NGOs), corporations, global and regional bodies, etc., and differ between wealthy countries and countries of the Global South, as well as between and within the Global South and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). There are nuances within the environmental sector as well – between Wangari Maathai’s Green Belt Movement, Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Slow Food Movement, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and The Right to Nature.<sup>7</sup> Reports such as the 1987 Brundtland Report “Our Common Future,” annual WWF reports, the Rights of Mother Earth Declarations and the work of journalists such as Sipho Kings of the *Mail & Guardian* are examples of this approach.<sup>8</sup>

Third are analyses of the ecological crisis that relate it to the political economy of capitalism or a specific phase of capitalism. This can be divided broadly into two subdivisions. In a global context, authors such as Joel Kovel, John Bellamy Foster, Vandana Shiva, Victor Wallis, Naomi Klein, Michael Löwy, Nnimmo Bassey and Ariel Salleh argue that the ecological crisis is caused, by and large, by capitalist modes of production; some contribute by developing and enhancing ecofeminist, socialist and eco-socialist analysis. In the South African context, authors such as Patrick Bond, Jacklyn Cock, David Hallows, Victor Munnik and Mark Swilling offer similar analyses.<sup>9</sup> These authors develop a critique of capitalism and try to show that the ecological crisis cannot be resolved within current modes of production.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example Wangari Maathai, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience* (New York: Lantern Books, 2006); Wangari Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth* (New York: Doubleday, 2010); GreenPeace, “Our Core Values,” accessed December 7, 2015, <http://www.greenpeace.org/africa/en/>; World Wide Fund for Nature, “Who we are,” accessed December 7, 2015, [http://www.wwf.org.za/who\\_we\\_are/](http://www.wwf.org.za/who_we_are/); Slow Food, “Our philosophy,” accessed December 7, 2015, <https://www.slowfood.com/about-us/our-philosophy/>; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Principles and Procedures,” accessed December 8, 2015, <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example Gro Harlem Brundtland, “Report on the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future,” (United Nations, 1987); WWF, “Living Planet Report 2010,” (Netherlands: WWF, 2010); Rights of Mother Earth, “Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth,” accessed at December 15, 2017, <http://www.rightsofmotherearth.com/declaration-of-the-rights-of-mother-earth>; Sipho Kings, “O, Sea, can you Save us?” *Mail Guardian*, February 19 to 25, 2016. See, numerous other environmental coverage by Kings, which can be accessed at <https://mg.co.za/author/sipho-kings-mcdermott>.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* (London: Zed Books, 2007); John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); *Ecology Against Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002); *The Ecological Revolution: Making Peace with the Planet* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009); Stefano B. Longo, Rebecca Clausen and Brett Clark, *The Tragedy of the Commodity: Oceans, Fisheries and Aquaculture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2006); *Making Peace with the Earth: Beyond Resources, Land and Food Wars* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2012); *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (Berkely: North Atlantic Books, 2016); Victor Wallis, “Capitalist and Socialist Responses to Ecological Crisis,” *Monthly Review* 60 (2008): 25-40; “Beyond ‘Green Capitalism,’” *Monthly Review* 61 (2010): 32-48; Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything Capitalism vs Climate* (London: Allen Lane, 2014); Michael Löwy, *Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015); Nnimmo Bassey, *To Cook a Continent: Destructive Extraction and the Climate Crisis in Africa* (Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2012); Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*

Unlike the political economists cited above, the ecological crisis and the transition to a low-carbon economy is seen by the scholars mentioned below as an opportunity to improve and regulate capitalism. Here the aim is to produce more environmentally friendly products and services, promote the development of technologies and argue for ecological modernisation. This is a perspective that argues for sustainable consumption in the countries of the North. Global examples of this discussion are found in the works of Arthur PJ Mol and Gert Spaargaren, Joseph Murphy, David Sonnenfeld and others.<sup>10</sup> These discussions focus broadly on regulation and the state, institutional reform, the creation of an environmentally safer capitalism and mechanisms to enhance these market-actors. These authors squarely fit into Foster's first category.

The above responses that are broadly categorised above bear different assumptions and consequences for how to understand the ecological crisis and therefore how to address it. The approaches show us that ecological discourses are influenced by political, ethical and economic imperatives, in ways that are not always obvious, predictable or linear. Each develops its own, often contested, set of research questions.

This study draws on material from these approaches to understand the ecological crisis, but is not located in any one of them. Instead, it focuses on the less frequently studied area of political thought and the historical trajectory of ideas, examining arguments and assumptions concerning the environment and the larger context of political ideas that impact on them. By examining the political movement of ecological ideas, largely through focusing on policy documents, scholarly texts as well as declarations and key research material of non-governmental organisation, I

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(London: Zed Books, 1997); Patrick Bond, *Politics of Climate Justice: Paralysis Above, Movement Below* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012); "Economic Growth, Ecological Modernization or Environmental Justice? Conflicting Discourses in Post-apartheid South Africa," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 11(2009): 33–61; Jacklyn Cock, *The War Against Ourselves: Nature, Power and Justice* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007); *Going Green: People, Politics and the Environment in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); David Hallows, *Toxic Futures: South Africa in the Crisis of Energy, Environment and Capital* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press/Ground Work, 2011); David Hallows and Victor Munnik, *Peak Poison: The Elite Energy Crisis and Environmental Justice* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press/Ground Work Report, 2007); Mark Swilling and Eve Annecke, *Just Transitions: Exploration of Sustainability in an Unfair World* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012); Mark Swilling, Josephine Kaviti Musango and Jeremy Wakeford, ed. *Greening the South African Economy: Scoping the Issues, Challenges and Opportunities* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example the work of Arthur PJ Mol and Gert Spaargaren, "Ecological Modernisation Theory in Debate: A Review," in *Environmental Politics* 9 (2000) 17 – 49; Joseph Murphy, "Ecological Modernisation," in *Geoforum* 31 (2000) 1 – 8; David Sonnenfeld, "Social Movements and Ecological Modernisation: The Transformation of Pulp and Paper Manufacturing," in *Development and Change* 33 (2002) 1 – 27.

make explicit the relationship between nature and society that these ideas presuppose and thereby help to validate. Borrowing from Maria Mies, my dissertation aims to “find a social and historical explanation for the phenomenon” of the devaluation of nature.<sup>11</sup>

#### **1.4 Approach used**

This dissertation uses a historical perspective. It draws on the example of Carolyn Merchant's reconstruction of the scientific revolution, which enables us to see the interrelated and unfolding changes, both in social relations and relations between society and nature. Merchant argues that conceptions of nature have changed over time and that these changing conceptions have ecological impacts. According to Katherine Park, “the most enduring contribution of *The Death of Nature*” is its focus on what Merchant calls the “historical alternatives, both real and utopian, [that] challenged some of the excesses of mainstream society.”<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Park puts forward that “these alternatives were both intellectual and social—ways of conceiving the world and ways of reorganizing society.”<sup>13</sup> One of the most important aspects of Merchant’s contribution is that she “challenged the belief in the socially progressive character of the scientific revolution, arguing that the advent of scientific rationalism produced a cultural shift from an organic to a mechanical paradigm that legitimized the exploitation of women and nature.”<sup>14</sup>

##### ***1.4.1 Ecological discourse as part of the history of political thought***

How we conceptualise nature and the relationship between nature and society is shaped by historical context. The benefit of returning to an earlier historical context is that connections between political, economic and environmental change that took place then, are now apparent in ways that they were not in their own time. The seventeenth century is the specific context the study returns to in order to find a context in which the interconnection of ecological, social and intellectual change is clearly visible to us. It does so, because it was during the period of the Scientific Revolution that a new relationship between nature and society was established. This

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<sup>11</sup> Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Capitalist Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1998), viii.

<sup>12</sup> Katherine Park, “Women, Gender, and Utopia: The Death of Nature and the Historiography of Early Modern Science,” *Isis* 97 (2006): 494.

<sup>13</sup> Park, “Women, Gender, and Utopia,” 494.

<sup>14</sup> Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Delhi: Phoneme, 2013), 13.

relationship has continued into the present, has expanded around the entire world and has extended into areas of life previously governed by other norms such as an organic worldview.<sup>15</sup>

Capitalism is central to this project because it was part of the context in which the Scientific Revolution occurred and is the operative context informing ecological discourse in South Africa today. It was central to the former historical period because the separation of nature from society was a key element of the process of primitive accumulation, and continues today in new forms of capital accumulation.

There are many works on the Scientific Revolution and its larger impact. To my mind, Carolyn Merchant stands out because her work pioneers an understanding of how society affects and is affected by nature. Her work sets out to challenge the “hegemony of mechanistic science as a marker of progress” and that, “seventeenth-century science could be implicated in the ecological crisis, the domination of nature and the devaluation of women in the production of scientific knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> It is for this reason that I have chosen to draw especially on her work.

In *The Death of Nature: Ecology, Women and the Scientific Revolution*, Merchant argues that, “concepts of nature ... are historical and social constructions. There are no unchanging ‘essential’ characteristics of sex, gender, or nature. Individuals form concepts about nature and their own relationships to it that draw on the ideas and norms of the society into which they are born, socialized, and educated.”<sup>17</sup> Today the dominant context for understanding relations of society and nature is from the inception of capitalism.

Pre-modern societies understood that there was a delicate relationship between people and nature. People and nature were part of a whole, conceived of as an organic and cosmic unity.<sup>18</sup> This was evident from the sacrifices and rituals dedicated to the gods and nature so as to maintain harmony and balance in the universe. The pre-modern world was viewed as organic and interdependent.<sup>19</sup>

During the period of feudal Western society nature was “cast in the female

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<sup>15</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 1-14. (All quotations are from the 1989 edition, which will hereafter be cited as Merchant, *Death of Nature*).

<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Merchant, “The Scientific Revolution and The Death of Nature,” *Isis* 97 (2006): 513.

<sup>17</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

gender.”<sup>20</sup> It was predominantly seen as a nurturing mother but a corresponding opposing view was of nature as a wild and uncontrollable female.<sup>21</sup> The latter conception became dominant as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanise and rationalise the worldview.<sup>22</sup> This idea of nature as wild, uncontrolled and disordered gave rise to the idea of people gaining power over nature. The changing idea of nature converges with that of Christianity, capitalism, industrialisation and the Scientific Method. This is evident through Francis Bacon’s assertion that, “only let mankind regain their rights over nature, assigned to them by the gift of God, and obtain that power, whose exercise will be governed by right reason and true religion.”<sup>23</sup>

Mechanism and the domination of nature are new ideas that became core concepts of the modern world.<sup>24</sup> In this context, Bacon’s idea to exert control over nature and man to become its master, takes hold. Merchant levels a fierce critique against Bacon’s work as the “search for natural knowledge in terms of a physically coercive relationship between male inquirer and female nature, expressed in metaphors of marital discipline, inquisition, and rape.”<sup>25</sup>

With the expansion of Europe into new markets, the rise of industry and commerce, a new conceptualisation of nature emerges, partly enabled by the Scientific Revolution.<sup>26</sup> Nature comes to be “other”—that is, separated from humanity and at its service. Changes arising in human culture shaped the concept of nature. To master nature and to master savages became an essential component of, as well as justification for, what is meant to “civilise.”<sup>27</sup> This particular worldview from the Scientific Revolution about control over nature is inextricably linked to ideas of progress. This new way of thinking about nature is part of a mechanical model of viewing the world that shifts away from an earlier organic worldview.

Christianity, imperial conquest, the new discipline of economics, the Scientific Revolution, capitalist social relations, the bifurcation of gender and the unequal

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2. See also Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women*.

<sup>21</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>23</sup> James Spedding and Robert Hawkes Ellis, trans., *Novum Organum: Francis Bacon 1561–1626* (London: Routledge, 1905).

<sup>24</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Park, “Women, Gender, and Utopia,” 488.

<sup>26</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Bassey, shows how Thomas Pakenham’s *The Scramble for Africa* and David Livingstone viewed the taming of nature and people in Africa. See, Bassey, *To Cook a Continent*, 5.

ascribed value of gender roles and the capacity to exploit nature all form part of a single process as shown by Merchant and others.<sup>28</sup> These inherited processes and effects came to be felt and reflected in South Africa, centuries later, when looking at the areas of land, mining and fishing.

Merchant's work shows how ideas are shaped and formed. She sets out how the concept of nature during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was shaped by interrelated processes and ideas. Of great importance, is that she "showed how writers could use science both to reinforce oppressive social, political and material orders and imagine themselves out of them."<sup>29</sup> In so doing, she opens an understanding of how a particular notion of nature is formed and streams into specific ways of society being with nature.

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If this approach is taken forward into the twentieth century, in a different but equally significant way, Rachel Carson's work is a second example of how processes changing nature are part of a larger whole, affecting society in ways which are not obvious at first.<sup>30</sup> *Silent Spring* is an attempt to show how through a larger process resulting from World War II, technological innovations and the resulting chemical warfare inventions have filtered into the household and fundamentally altered nature and society in unforeseen ways.<sup>31</sup> Her account shows how pesticides and chemicals have become part of the household shopping list and daily domestic life—how the expansion of consumer markets made a deadly product normal. The act of using pesticide on weeds leads to the contamination of the soil, water and food creating health hazards that affect society and the natural environment, and interrelated connections are clearly demonstrated. Her work helps to show that the introduction of

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<sup>28</sup> For an extensive and rich discussion of the period before and during the Scientific Revolution read Robert Mandrou, *From Humanism to Science, 1480–1700* (Great Britain: Pelican Books, 1973); Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring Science into Democracy* (India: Orient Longman, 2007); *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993); Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature*.

<sup>29</sup> Park, "Women, Gender, and Utopia," 495.

<sup>30</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (England: Penguin Books, 2000); See Foster, *Ecological Revolution*, 67 – 83 in which Foster outlines the significance of Carson's ecological critique.

<sup>31</sup> Carson did not articulate this in the same way as Merchant, but if one applies Merchant's way of seeing how things relate and are interrelated, then one can also deduce this from Carson's *Silent Spring*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) Also see how the idea of 'oikos' was interpreted in Lesley Green's "Ecology, Race and the making of Environmental Publics: A Dialogue with *Silent Spring* in South Africa," (paper presented at the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics, University of Cape Town (UCT), Cape Town, July 30, 2009).



pesticides and chemicals was both subtle and invasive, as well as how it has become tied up in consumerism in ways we find hard to recognise.

Carson also explores a number of other, simultaneously unfolding processes, where the control exacted over nature was not as apparent as with the use of pesticides and chemicals. For instance, the Cold War and the consequent drive to control territories, peoples and ideas, was critical. In response to this control, the Third World as a political project for national liberation emerged. In many instances, these liberation struggles inherited and subsequently aspired towards a Western conception of modernity. Another unfolding process for instance, was that in the United States the production of pesticides and chemicals on a large scale gave rise to increased manufacturing and many new products and jobs. This process contributed to urbanisation and new areas of work. Specifically, these new areas of work now extended to include women. Paid factory work for women coincided with chemical control over nature through production and also increased their work day, which now included paid work in addition to the unpaid household work.

Joel Kovel and others have related a similar, although not identical, range of changes to the ecological crisis today.<sup>32</sup> The changes taking place in South Africa since the end of apartheid are perhaps more modest in scale than those of the Scientific Revolution, and form part of a global context described by Kovel.<sup>33</sup> It is hard to estimate their global historical importance while we are in the midst of them. It is, however, reasonable to suppose that the same kind of analysis attempted by Merchant and others can be attempted in the South Africa context.

My dissertation is an attempt to analyse the politics of the ecological crisis in South Africa within their larger historical context.

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<sup>32</sup> Kovel, *Enemy of Nature*.

<sup>33</sup> See Kovel, *Enemy of Nature*, in which he explains the eco-destructive and anti-ecological nature of capitalism. Capital is eco-destructive because under the present economic regime, large parts of the natural world are becoming undone. He describes the extent of the ecological fallout and deterioration and argues that the era of environmental awareness has also been the era of greatest environmental breakdown. Oil consumption has increased from 46 million barrels a day to 73 million. Natural gas extraction has increased from 34 trillion cubic feet per year to 95 trillion. Human carbon emissions have increased from 3.9 million metric tons annually to an estimate 6.4 million – this despite the additional impetus to cut back caused by global warming, which was not perceived to be a factor in 1970. Fish were taken at twice the rate as in 1970. The gap between rich and poor nations, according to the United Nations went from a factor of 3:1 in 1820 to 35:1 in 1950; 44:1 in 1973 – at the beginning of the environmentally sensitive era – to 72:1 in 1990, roughly two-thirds of the way through it (1-3; 95).

### ***1.4.2 Ecological discourse as part of a whole***

Earlier, I used Merchant's work to briefly sketch how conceptions about nature changed over time. Now I draw on her work to show that historical change and ecological change are connected. I do this to show that ecological discourse in South Africa should be understood as part of a whole and is shaped by processes and events taking place in South Africa and globally.

Merchant puts forward that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, important cultural changes occurred. These included the increases and decreases in population growth, conflict over the control of natural resources between landlords and peasants, changing values associated with a gendered division of labour, new forms of production and values ascribed to them, technological inventions, expansion of the capitalist market model and changing philosophies towards nature and the earth.<sup>34</sup> Critical for Merchant, is to ask how do the changes taking place in the natural environment influence human culture and institutions, as well as how does the mechanistic model reinforce and accelerate the exploitation of nature and human beings as resources.<sup>35</sup> The significance of her approach is to link how changes arising in culture affected and were affected by the natural environment.

Merchant's work on forests, fens and farms during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows how in England commerce drove technological innovation, which resulted in commercial expansion and ecological destruction. New state policies emerged that caused greater economic exploitation of the environment. This had a negative effect on livelihoods based around subsistence farming and communal living. Communities dependent on the particular environment fought back, resisted and revolted.

People were displaced, forced off their communal lands and out of their homes and into new areas of work and ways of living. Women's work on the land, in homes and the community, as well as their related knowledge, was pushed further to the margins, rendering them passive. A sharpening of the gendered division of labour emerged, giving greater monetary value to the work of men and in so doing devalued the work of women. This artificial division gave rise to both paid and unpaid labour.

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<sup>34</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 43.

As the environment was exploited and natural resources became depleted, so too did the natural environment change, and in turn, force commerce and technology to adapt and evolve. With the depletion and decline of natural resources, the state then needed to intervene to conserve natural resources so as to commence the cycle of use, expansion and exploitation. The resulting effects were felt at multiple levels in society. As industrial capital evolved, so too did encroachment on the environment, and in turn, on how people lived, altering the world around them and their conception of it.

Merchant's expansive exposition and method of examining the historical roots of the current ecological crisis shows us the need, and gives us a model and guide, to ask: What are the political ideas, assumptions and arguments influencing the relationship between society and nature in South Africa? How are those ideas formed by the Scientific Revolution's conception of nature generally and in the context of South Africa? What are the changes in the ecological discourse connected to the character of the post-apartheid society?

### **1.5 Mapping the processes in South Africa affecting the natural environment**

The substantive chapters of this dissertation examine a longer history of the relationship of nature and society in South Africa, going back to the mineral revolution and the emergence of racial capitalism. However, the aim of the dissertation is to explain how the ecological discourse of liberation ideology has addressed, or failed to address, the current ecological crisis. In that context, I focus very briefly on processes specific to the transition from apartheid to democracy. Below, I outline only four processes, which have affected the natural environment during transition periods. This is in no way an exhaustive discussion.<sup>36</sup>

The first relevant process is the transition from apartheid to democracy. The end of apartheid meant the ability of all South Africans to move freely. Relocation and movement between rural and urban areas has increased. Population density has risen

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<sup>36</sup> See Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, *South Africa Environment Outlook: A report on the State of the Environment* (Pretoria: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2006) xix, which argues the significant drivers, which affect the environment are population growth, economic activities, governance and the levels of technology and innovation. Also see Department of Environmental Affairs, *2nd South Africa Environment Outlook: A report on the state of the environment* (Pretoria: Department of Environmental Affairs, 2012), 18. In addition to significant national drivers this report adds international drivers such as globalisation, global governance and multilateral environmental agreements.

as a result of population influx from villages. Demand on goods and services rose.<sup>37</sup> Increased pressure has been placed on the natural environment.<sup>38</sup>

The second process is the transition from state-interventionism to neo-liberalism. Centralised state assets and control of natural environments have given way to decentralisation. The compartmentalisation of natural environments has created a fragmented approach to the protection and maintenance of the natural environment. A shift from state-owned public goods to commodification and privatisation has undermined state responsibility for stewardship and guardianship of the natural environment. Public goods and management of energy, water, waste, forestry, mining, etc., have been further privatised in varying degrees through public-private partnerships (PPP).<sup>39</sup> Many public state companies have been sold off, shifting the objective of these institutions from public service provision to revenue and profit generation.

Placing a profit motive on the delivery of public goods and services alters where and how costs are cut. Public natural resources such as water, clean air, energy and so on, shift to being private commodities with the process of commercialisation. The social and political aspects and the economics of public goods such as water and electricity are now changed. Profiting from public goods such as water, changes how it is used and conceived of. For example, large loans for mega-dam infrastructure were made. These dams dramatically reshaped water flow, displaced communities and denied communities access to water. After 1994, the World Bank's (WB) neoliberal model was adopted and implemented in South Africa with limited regard for the ecological fallout. This was a global phenomenon, however, and part of the neo-liberal counter-revolution sweeping the globe after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.<sup>40</sup>

The third process was the reorganisation of apartheid capitalism. Black economic empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action were mooted in 1996 as a means to deracialise capitalism. In 1997 the Black Economic Empowerment

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<sup>37</sup> Population was 32.2 million in 1984, 40 million in 1994, 47 million in 2004 and 54.1 million in 2014.

<sup>38</sup> The free movement of people to public spaces such as beaches, parks, malls, shops, suburbs, etc., increased with the lifting of "white areas."

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Greenberg, *The State, Privatisation and the Public Sector in South Africa* (Harare: Southern African Peoples' Solidarity Network, 2006), 4–5.

<sup>40</sup> Greenberg, *State of Privatisation*, 12.

Commission was established.<sup>41</sup> The National Empowerment Fund has been the vehicle facilitating access of previously disadvantaged persons to public assets being privatised. This has meant a new and expanding middle class, coupled with new lifestyle patterns. The emergence of overt consumerism has been accompanied by increasing number of goods and services as well as waste.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, there has been faster generational turnover of products. Income for new groups of middle class society has increased dramatically.

The liberalisation of goods and services through deregulation of the economy means that there are more cars, fridges, electronics, malls, fast food chains, etc., than before, resulting in higher energy needs and therefore greater carbon emissions. This transition in South Africa has occurred within a larger context of globalisation where goods and services know no borders.

The rise of transnational corporations, and opening up the economy for so-called foreign direct investment (FDI), has resulted in the financialisation of the economy, job losses, increased flexibility of work and stagnation of wages. These new processes have contributed to a drive towards super-extractivism and an export-orientated economy. Due to financial liberalisation, we have seen an increase of capital flight and tax evasion within the mining sector. Privatisation has contributed to massive and rising unemployment, the intensification of reproductive unwaged work subsidising the state and corporates and the spiralling feminisation of poverty.

The policy approach by the ANC government to address historical issues of racial dispossession through capitalism in the new dispensation has not only augmented market-relations, but has fostered the intense commodification of nature, and borne new forms of enclosure and commodification of commons. To facilitate and ensure that the new black elite reap gains from the capitalist system, new capital accumulation in the mining sector has meant new and greater areas of exploitation of minerals and metals as well as labour, both paid and unpaid.

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<sup>41</sup> See Martin Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007), 463; Greenberg, *State of Privatisation*, 23; Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2010), 140.

<sup>42</sup> Parallel is a culture of aspiring to opulence. *Top Billing*, a television show on public television (South African Broadcasting Corporation, channel 3) is a reflection of certain middle class cultural aspirations. Importantly, the rainbow nation means that we “all” can presumably have everything – equally – if we have the money. Also see, Allen Finlay and David Liechti. *E-Waste Assessment in South Africa* (Durban: E-Waste Association of South Africa, 2008), accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.ngopulse.org/sites/default/files/e-Waste%20Assessment%20South%20Africa.pdf>.

The fourth process is the emergence of managerial and technicist ethics of delivery. In the first few years after 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) sought to roll out identity documents, electricity, water, land, housing, basic health care, telephone landlines, etc., to people who previously were off the grid and excluded due to apartheid.<sup>43</sup> Although some progress is alleged during the immediate post-apartheid period, women and the poor still bear the brunt of unequal service distribution and delivery.<sup>44</sup>

The introduction of the Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) in 1997 saw government spending on basic and social infrastructure decrease in real terms. A marked decline in delivery became apparent by 2000. GEAR represented the end of liberation euphoria, as many promises of delivery appeared empty. Policy proposals in the early period of the new democracy with regard to the environment were already drafted with a strong neo-liberal character such that implementation plans readily reflect the commercialisation of nature.<sup>45</sup>

The language of outsourcing and co-sourcing, vendors and tenders, clients and services, procurement, performance management, quality assurance, etc., quickly got augmented in this period. Citizens became clients. A shift from “delivery of services” discourse to “management of services” occurred and in the process weakened state control, skills within state structures and delivery of essential public goods to communities. Civil servants were procuring services and skills from private businesses. Civil servants became responsible for managing tenders, finding and vetting vendors and overseeing quality assurance. When private business is doing the

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<sup>43</sup> According to the Carnegie3 report, unemployment rose between 1995 – 2002 from 15.1% to 30.4% although they mention that some progress was made during the early years of the democratic government. For an outline on delivery the report puts forward figures for housing etc., built in the periods 1994 – 1995 and 2006 – 2007 respectively. See Francis Wilson and Vaun Cornell, “Overcoming Poverty and Inequality: Guide to Carnegie3 Conference,” (Cape Town: SALDRU, UCT, 2014), accessed January 15, 2016, [http://www.carnegie3.org.za/docs/Carnegie3\\_April13\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.carnegie3.org.za/docs/Carnegie3_April13_WEB.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> See Wilson and Cornell, “Overcoming Poverty and Inequality.” The summary of the Carnegie 3 report notes that: “poverty is widespread and severe with over 54% in 2008 of the population living below the poverty datum line;” and although poverty declined slightly from 56% to 54% between 1993 and 2008 this was primarily because of the roll out of social grants. Furthermore “inequality in the country is very deep” and has deepened over the past 15 years. The report noted that “[p]oor South Africans are still typically female, African and rural.” There is a dispute over the data and if and to what extent progress has been made. See Haroon Borat and Carlene Van Der Westhuisen, for a literature review of this discussion. They note that regardless of the discrepancies of data, they show in fact that “[t]he results, however do suggest that the first five years of democracy were not accompanied by significant improvements in the welfare of South Africa’s citizens.” “Poverty, Inequality and the Nature of Economic Growth in South Africa,” UCT, Department Policy Research Unit: Working Paper 12/151, 2012, accessed November 23, 2015, [http://www.dpru.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/36/DPRU%20WP12-151.pdf](http://www.dpru.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/DPRU%20WP12-151.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> See Patrick Bond, “Economic Growth, Ecological Modernisation or Environmental Justice? Conflicting Discourses in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 11 (2009) 33 -61, accessed June 14, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10455750009358896>.

work of the state, the philosophy of service delivery as a public good has been compromised. The agenda is being set from outside the “developmental” state.

The land question with its ecological, social and political – as well as rural and urban – dimensions and pressures is deeply connected to apartheid, as are the politics of service delivery or lack thereof in the new democratic era. To develop an ecological critique of land linked only to “environmental” concerns and climate change is to remain unable to address the deep challenges with regard to the multi-faceted land question in South Africa.

Slum conditions have become increasingly common due to the lack of delivery, maintenance and healthcare in our lived and built environment. Water sources are contaminated due to inadequate sewage disposal. In the townships, overcrowding leading to high-density pressure, increased air and water pollution and other such negative side effects, has become the norm. This is part of the South African ecological crisis. The new public management systems and practices have directly contributed to this. The first wave of protests erupted in the 1990s, and protest action continues to escalate due to frustration and anger at terrible living conditions and the increased lack of delivery.<sup>46</sup> For many, this lack of delivery is coupled with neoliberal GEAR policies and rampant corruption and looting of public resources by those in political office and neoliberal public private partnerships (PPP).<sup>47</sup>

## **1.6 An example of how political and economic changes in South Africa affect the natural environment**

Below, I illustrate by way of example, how these specific South African processes and more general ones impact on the natural environment after apartheid

In 1994, Vodacom “switched on” as the first network provider in South Africa and at the end of the first five months they had 100 000 users; in 1996 they added a pay-as-you-go service and 60 000 customers signed up in the first month; in 1997 they had a total of 606 000 customers and publicly committed to an environmental plan. In 2004 the company had over 1 million users.<sup>48</sup> At the start of the 2016 financial year, Vodacom announced that “there are 34.2 million customers, 2.1

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<sup>46</sup> Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005), 84-85; Marais, *Pushed to the Limit*, 216.

<sup>47</sup> Marais, *Pushed to the Limit*, 216.

<sup>48</sup> Vodacom, *Vodacom Group Annual Report 2004*, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.vodacom.co.za/cs/groups/public/documents/document/pocm01-584695.pdf>.

million up from last year.”<sup>49</sup> The Statistics South Africa General Household Survey 2013 showed that only 5% of households had access to neither landlines nor cellular phones, 81.9% only had access to cellular phones and a mere 0.2% use landlines only.<sup>50</sup> Today it is commonplace for households to have cellular phones, as shown above. During apartheid, most socioeconomically disadvantaged people did not have direct access to telephonic communication. After apartheid there was an effort to roll out telephone lines to households and communities.

Telkom was a state company and had a monopoly on telecommunications provision. By 1997, Telkom was partially privatised.<sup>51</sup> Soon after the privatisation process was completed, Telkom’s network rollout of new lines and maintenance delivery was hindered by the reduction of state subsidies and a shift towards profit generation. In 2001 BEE shares were advertised and deals were struck, further privatising telecommunications. The cost of calls increased and the rollout to poor communities declined, as it was not profitable to service these areas. By 2001, two-thirds of 2.1 million lines installed over four years were disconnected due to bad payments. By 2005, fixed line numbers were lower than the 1997 fixed line exclusive period. In 2005 Telkom employed just under 35 000 employees and had retrenched some 23 000 since 1995 as a result of privatisation. The profit after tax by 2005 was staggering and at the expense of jobs and supplying fixed lines to those that were supposed to be beneficiaries of expanded service delivery.<sup>52</sup>

In effect, the larger shift to a neoliberal economic model and form of governance in the case of telecommunications has meant an increased use of “dirty” energy in an over-reliant system under severe strain. The result is an increase in carbon emissions which has thus increased the rate of climate change.

New technologies such as cellular phones were rapidly introduced after 1994. Vodacom brought the Internet to cellular phones in 2001, 3G in 2004, mobile broadband in 2007 and modem packages soon thereafter. Telkom originally had a 50% share of Vodacom with no competitors. With the liberalisation of the economy other cellular services received licenses. The Competition Commission challenged the

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<sup>49</sup> Vodacom, *Vodacom Group Limited: Preliminary results for year ended 31 March 2016*, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.vodacom.co.za/cs/groups/public/documents/document/vodacom-prelim-results-march-2.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Statistics South Africa, *General Household Survey 2013*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Greenberg, *State of Privatisation*, 3. Greenberg explains privatisation is the sale, handover and reorganisation of state assets to the private sector. This process can take many forms but a necessary aspect is “corporatisation and commercialisation” which orientate “a state entity to the market and competition.”

<sup>52</sup> Greenberg, *State of Privatisation*, 44-50.



cellular phone cartel and price fixing was questioned. Thereafter, sim cards, cellular phones, contracts, pay-as-you go, airtime, etc., became more affordable. Cellular phone purchases increased dramatically due to cheaper prices and Telkom's inability to provide affordable telecommunication. The effect was that cellular phones became popular as a mode of communication.

What is not always obvious is that having and replacing a cellular phone with the latest and better model and technology means high consumerism – in most cases changing cellular phones is part of the contract deal, thereby locking one into a pattern of excessive consumerism. Everyday, millions of people in South Africa have to recharge their cellular phones. This is not the case with a landline. Many people upgrade their cellular phones and discard the previous one. There is currently no trade-in deal with cellular phones, nor an e-waste management and recycling system. This is not so readily the case with a landline. This means increased hazardous e-waste, bigger landfills, non-recycled cellular batteries, and as a result, contaminated soil.

This ecological fallout of the new technology in the case of the cellular phone shows the economic, ecological, political, social and cultural implications of the roll-out of cellular phones and simultaneous demise of household landlines. This is not to imply that we should abandon the new technology or specifically denounce the use of cellular phones. Instead, it illustrates how new technology is directly linked to intended and unintended processes. It means that we need to rethink the consumerism and waste that cellular phones entail despite the high tax revenues and “jobs” that the cellular phone industry brings. Given the ecological pressure, the best option we have is to ring-fence uncomfortable or inconvenient aspects of cellular phone use. Likewise, it is the duty of the state and industry to address the concerns about e-waste and not fob the problem off onto the “consumer.”

While making apparent the proliferation of communication through the cellular phone, it is necessary in the context of this study to point to how mobile phones have promoted the kind of individualism fostered by neoliberalism. Cellular phones are privately owned commodities, whereas the landline is a communal resource in the same way a personal computer was in the home prior to the introduction of laptops. Now what was once a joint shared “asset” for the household is a private item – it is not “permissible” to use someone else's cellular phone. The argument is that they are

costly, an investment and a private belonging. And yet Harvey argues that the dilemma of being “connected” through technology and neoliberal forms of organisation is that “a contradiction arises between the seductive but alienating possessive individualism on the one hand and the desire for meaningful collective life on the other. While individuals are supposedly free to choose, they are not supposed to choose to construct strong collective institutions.”<sup>53</sup>

Cellular phones and the form of communication that has proliferated with them alienate individuals from themselves, the larger society and nature in particular. Society, through technology and science, drives the production and consumption of cellular phones. This affects nature through the vast extraction of labour, the minerals, metals and energy required to produce, recharge and replace the cellular phone, as well as the through hazardous waste. This extraction and technology affects society in turn, as the more one extracts from nature for wants and not needs, the more one delinks from meaningful appreciation for what nature affords one. If we simply continue to ignore the excessive drain that cellular phones have, the end result might simply mean no cellular phones at all, if or when the limited natural resources require us to prioritise boiling water, turning on the lights, heating food and other essentials over the charging of cellular phones.

## **1.7 Methodological approach**

My dissertation examines land, mining and fishing as they most concretely symbolise the natural environment and are critical areas in the history of South Africa. How South Africa has developed and transformed socially, politically, economically and ecologically can be traced through these three focus areas. I extensively reviewed the literature on the political, social and economic dimensions of land, mining, fishing and ecological discourse. In each of these areas I traced the historical idea found in central texts, which influenced and transformed concepts, and sought to locate where these ideas and assumptions originated.

I traced the shifting conceptions of how land, mining and fishing are understood to be part of nature and society, by examining literature sources such as the constitution, government policy documents, government reports, research reports, historical texts, seminal work in the specific focus areas, scholarly books, journal

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<sup>53</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

articles, newspaper articles, press releases, union documents written in the sector pertaining to the natural environment by government, unions, business, civil society and academia from both the period before and after 1994. I had to locate and trace the national liberation movement's ideology and footprint in the ANC-led government's transition documents and subsequent economic and national policy at a broad level but also in the various government departments.

The dissertation necessitated a close reading of the South African environmental policies, international environmental reports and the UN declarations and reports on sustainable development, climate change and environment.

I collected texts such as campaign and popular education materials, slogans, declarations and research of South African NGOs, social movements and community based organisations with regards to land, mining and fishing. I identified and located popular and research organisations that work with environment and trade as well as those who worked with environmental justice early on in the democratic period, and read their booklets and materials. Similarly, I combed through South African NGO archives and declarations with regards to climate change, energy and related issues of shale-fracking, acid drainage, green ecology and ecologically friendly technology. This data provided an entry point to explore how the relationship between nature and society was understood by non-governmental and non-academic institutions. It furthermore offered concrete examples of how political and economic changes affecting nature impacted communities. Often these non-governmental organisations signalled which land, mining and fishing policies has the most direct bearing on communities. More often than not, the literature mirrored what was on the international agenda with regards ecological discourse. Selecting and reading such a broad range of material allowed me to ascertain a sense of the commonly held ideas about nature across the South African political spectrum.

I examined these texts by asking how the relationship between nature and society is set out, what sector-specific factors shape this, whether the analyses account for the broader ecological crisis, and if so, how.

## **1.8 Structure of the dissertation**

Chapter 2 of this dissertation sets out different conceptions of society's relationship with nature. Specifically, I contrast two conceptions of the tragedy of the commons, so as to foreground how the idea of private-property and the act of enclosures,

privatisation and title deeds or the allocation of private quotas, has transformed nature as communal to nature as transferable, owned and controlled. In this chapter, I argue that there are historical alternative conceptions of how to relate to nature.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 develop an historical account of the ecological discourse in South Africa in relation to land, mining and fishing respectively. In Chapter 3, I trace an ill-fated demand for land as private property. I argue that racial dispossession of land pre-1994 shaped land policy in the new dispensation and continues to influence contemporary calls for the de-racialisation of land ownership by South African land movements. The chapter foregrounds the social relations transformed with the separation of land and people over time.

Chapter 4 traces the idea of making mineral wealth work for the people. I argue that mineral extraction rests upon one of the most ecologically destructive practices in the world and that the jobs and improved living conditions allegedly brought about through mining must be critically examined. I bring to the fore both the deceit and the illusions about what mining promises to deliver. I show that mining is based on the objectification of minerals and metals as well as mineworkers and mining-affected communities.

Chapter 5 traces historically how the South African state goes to great lengths to exert control over the fish and marine commons through its policies. I argue that fish as nature, life, food and community are transformed over time into commodities and objects due to the changing conception of nature. What the fish represented in the past, and how it is seen today is made visible in this chapter.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I conclude the dissertation. This final chapter considers questions of political perspective and agency related to ecological questions in South Africa today. It provides a survey of government, activist and community initiatives and an assessment of their potential to contribute to establishing a new relationship between nature and society, enabling both to flourish.

## Chapter Two: Another Nature is Possible

### 2.1 Introduction

To critique existing reality implies that alternatives are possible – theoretically, at least, if not historically. This is a potentially endless task, but it is explored here mainly to the extent that it clarifies the historical analysis that follows.

In talking of an alternative relationship of nature and society, we must not lose sight of how the dominant relationship was itself the result of a protracted and complex process. This involved changes in nature, new productive techniques as well as changes in relations of class and gender. The dominance of this relationship and its related changes was achieved through imperialist conquest, slavery and the establishment of global markets. In a similar way, we should think of an alternative relationship as the result of a many-sided process, even if we cannot foresee all its component parts. Important is to gain a clearer sense of what makes ideas and initiatives potentially part of such an alternative and how the existence of alternatives is hidden by the dominant relationship between society and nature.

The three main aims of this chapter are (i) to set out a case for and against “no alternative” to private property in the context of the tragedy of the commons; (ii) to show one alternative conception of how society can relate to nature – developed by Princen – of the logic of sufficiency (without implying this is the only alternative); and (iii) to show how similar alternative conceptions of the relationship between society and nature emerged before the current ecological crisis by drawing briefly on the work of Gandhi and Schumacher.<sup>1</sup> I refer to these alternatives because they clarify the *scale* of alternatives and illuminate an approach that best suits the underpinnings of this dissertation, which is to bring to the fore the possibility of a different relationship with nature.

### 2.2 Historical critique and theoretical alternatives

Alternatives form part of a broader tradition of developing and thinking about society. In particular, they aim to show a society where social relationships are not defined and determined by the market. This dissertation reveals the connections between a set

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005); M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989).

of assumptions about a good, modern society and the consequent impact various processes have on nature, both human and non-human. In so doing the dissertation seeks to foreground the possibilities of another logic and other driving forces in society.

A deep rupture occurred between society and nature in the seventeenth century and the consequences are being felt today. Exposing multiple aspects of the separation between society and nature enables us to trace the perhaps unintended consequences of this rupture, whilst these various aspects were being forged. These changing relationships between society and nature are often contested. They do not evolve in a linear process and they have real material outcomes. Practices and lived experiences alter and transform landscapes, the relationships within and between communities and between humans and nature. To use Merchant's words, "society affects and gets affected by nature."<sup>2</sup> This is evident through the current ecological crisis and as will be outlined in the proceeding chapters on land, mining and fishing.

As outlined in Chapter 1, there are numerous approaches and critiques of climate change globally and the broader ecological crisis, some of which are mirrored in South Africa. By using an historical approach, this dissertation offers an additional lens through which we can identify the potential and limitations of some of these critiques. Furthermore, it reveals how we currently relate to nature in South Africa and how apparently progressive ideas have served to perpetuate the ecological crisis after the end of apartheid.

### **2.3 Two tragedies of the commons – Hardin and Merchant**

Historically, the commons refer to natural resources, such as the mountains, land, rivers, the sky, oceans and forests, etc. These spaces have been communally shared and accessed. They are not privately or state-owned, but are "held by an identifiable community of interdependent users" who wished to access or work them.<sup>3</sup> The conception of the tragedy of the commons brings to our attention how nature is conceived of, governed and regulated. The way in which nature is regulated reflects social, economic, political, ecological and philosophical beliefs and assumptions

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<sup>2</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature* 43.

<sup>3</sup> David Feeny et al., "The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later," *Human Ecology* 18 (1990): 4. The authors identify four property regimes: private property (these rights exclude others from using the resources and are transferable), state property (resources are vested in and access regulated by the state), open access property (absence of well-defined property rights) and communal property.

about the relationship between society and nature. There are two distinct ideas that underpin very different conceptions of the tragedy of the commons:

- (i) The tragedy occurs because of open access leading to exploitation of common resources. Thus, the commons need to be enclosed for their protection and safeguarding.
- (ii) Or contrastingly, enclosure of the commons is the tragedy, as the shift to privately owned property leads to a transformed conception of nature. The privatisation of nature in this way results in exploitation, which contributes to the current ecological crisis.

The first conception is set out by Garrett Hardin in his 1968 text, “The tragedy of the commons.” This text is regarded as the foundation for economic theory of environmental management and market environmentalism.<sup>4</sup> Several scholars set out a second conception of enclosures, which they regard as being the tragedy of the commons. This dissertation focuses on Carolyn Merchant’s critique of Hardin’s conception and her alternative conception of nature, which is located within a broader historical context.

### **2.3.1 Hardin’s “tragedy of the commons”**

Garrett Hardin’s “The Tragedy of the Commons” was a response to the debate on the growth of the population at the time. The model he put forward was a simple economic equation based on an assumption that human nature is naturally competitive and therefore human beings will always act in accordance with their individual interests. Elinor Ostrom puts forward that “[s]ince Garrett Hardin’s challenging article in *Science*, the expression ‘the tragedy of the commons’ has come to symbolize the degradation of the environment to be expected whenever many individuals use a

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<sup>4</sup> Karen Bakker, “The ‘Commons’ Versus the ‘Commodity’: Alter-globalization, Anti-privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South,” *Antipode* 432 (2007): 431–432. Bakker argues that environmental management is “a mode of resource regulation which aims to deploy markets as the solution to environmental problems. Market environmentalism offers hope of a virtuous fusion of economic growth, efficiency, and environmental conservation: through establishing private property rights, employing markets as allocation mechanisms, and incorporating environmental externalities through pricing, proponents of market environmentalism assert that environmental goods will be more efficiently allocated if treated as economic goods – thereby simultaneously addressing concerns over environmental degradation and inefficient use of resources.”

scarce resource in common.”<sup>5</sup> Hardin’s key concern was “how best to limit the use of natural resources so as to ensure their long-term economic viability.”<sup>6</sup>

Hardin theorised that there was a finite number of resources in the world and argued that there was no technical solution to the population problem. Many, according to him, sought to find a solution to the “evils of overpopulation without relinquishing any of the privileges they now enjoy.”<sup>7</sup> He argued that, given Malthus’s theory, the share per capita of resources available decreases over time. For Hardin “a finite world can support only a finite population.”<sup>8</sup> He set his argument out as follows:

The tragedy of the commons develops in this way. Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching, and disease keep the numbers of both man and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land. Finally, however, comes the day of reckoning, that is, the day when the long-desired goal of social stability becomes a reality. At this point, the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy.

As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, ‘What is the utility *to me* of adding one more animal to my herd?’ This utility has one negative and one positive component.

1) The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly +1.

2) The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1.

Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another; and another... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Garrett Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (1968): 1243

<sup>8</sup> Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” 1243.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1244.



Hardin therefore defines rationality as the Rational Beings acting to increase their personal gain. A Rational Being is not able to act differently as it would be against his interests. The Rational Being does not understand what natural limits are or chooses to disregard them. Freedom of the commons, according to Hardin, is thus not in the interests of the Rational Being. This freedom is the cause of the ruin, and hence the tragedy, of the commons.

Another example Hardin set out was that of the “freedom of the seas.” According to Hardin, over time, fish will be depleted and catches will decline due to open access and the individual competitive nature of the fishermen. Each fisherman wants to maximise his profits. Because the ocean is freely accessible to each fisherman, no one fisherman will act so as to preserve the ocean. The fisherman will not see it as his responsibility to fish in a sustainable way. Thus will not have regard for the stock levels but will rather focus on increasing his economic and personal gain. Hardin argues that, given that each fisherman is inclined to self-interest, they will all equally exploit the ocean’s resources in a manner that would reach unsustainable levels. In effect, the tragedy of the commons is open access combined with the competitive nature of the Rational Being to increase his profit. A critique lodged against Hardin is that “his solution, based on the assumption that human beings are an economically maximizing species, ignored the cooperative actions of subsistence-oriented peoples both in medieval Europe and in native and colonial America.”<sup>10</sup>

Hardin puts forward that the only way to overcome this tragedy is to find mechanisms to coerce fellow fisherman to operate within limits so as to ensure economic viability over time. Regulations need to be put in place and the idea of open access needs to be addressed. According to Hardin, there are no winners in the commons. His solution was the introduction of private property and assumed that private ownership implied that owners would better protect natural resources as they would have a vested interest in the resources’ longevity. Feeny argues that Hardin confuses the property regimes of open access with communal and notes this is a mistake that makes the theory incomplete and problematic. Communal property is not

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<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Merchant, “Fish First! The Changing Ethic in Ecosystem Management,” *Human Ecology Review* 4 (1990): 25. Drawn from A McEvoy, *The Fisherman’s Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850–1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); SJB Cox, “No Tragedy on the Commons,” *Environmental Ethics* 7 (1985): 49–69. R White, *The Organic Machine* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

open access but rather it is property “held by an identifiable community of interdependent users.”<sup>11</sup> It is not open and nor is it transferable, but it has features of self-regulation and governance to ensure safeguarding.

The idea that open access leads to tragedy because the Rational Being is innately competitive and driven by economic self-interest has had a lasting effect on natural resource policies and systems. Resource management and environmental studies are premised on Hardin’s conception of the tragedy of the commons. The introduction of enclosures, rights allocations, or various forms of privatisation legislated to *avert* the “tragedy” have however not averted the ecological crisis we are faced with today. Some argue that the tragedy of the commons is in part the very act of creating enclosures which is shaped by the logic of economic expansion and profit-making. It is further argued that this particular conception has contributed to and exacerbated the ecological crisis.

Becky Mansfield challenges Hardin’s conception of the tragedy of the commons. She writes that enclosures and privatisation, as advocated by Hardin, creates a particular relationship between society and nature, and that enclosures of land established in the eighteenth century in England and Scotland are archetypes of privatisation. Enclosures transform nature into private property, and therefore nature comes to be owned, controlled and transferrable. This results in the dispossession and exclusion of non-owners.<sup>12</sup> The shift from communal to private property and the creation of enclosures fundamentally alters the relationship between human beings and the environment, remaking ecosystems, livelihoods and identities.<sup>13</sup> One example of this remaking of relations is how the enclosures push those who till the soil and sustain themselves from it into waged labour.

Enclosure of commons transforms nature into a commodity that can be bought and sold. This transformation needs to be understood as part of a larger accumulation strategy and logic.<sup>14</sup> In recent years an example of this is the creation of market-based instruments (MBIs) for environmental management such as “taxes, charges, fees, fines, penalties, liability and compensation schemes, subsidies and incentives, and tradable permit schemes. There are several basic principles behind MBIs: the polluter

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<sup>11</sup> Feeny et al, “Twenty-Two Years Later,” 2.

<sup>12</sup> Becky Mansfield, “Privatization: Property and the Remaking of Nature–Society Relations,” *Antipode* 39 (2007): 393.

<sup>13</sup> Mansfield, “Privatization,” 393.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

pays principle, the user/beneficiary pays principle and the principle of full-cost recovery.”<sup>15</sup> These instruments are underpinned by Hardin’s conception of the tragedy of the commons.<sup>16</sup>

Mansfield’s critique of privatisation of the commons brings into focus privatisation as a fundamental element of liberalising an economy. She argues that the changing relationship of society and nature is not only a case of privatisation, but also a part of it. According to Mansfield, “privatization has particular salience for understanding contemporary nature-society relationship because property has become the central mode of regulating multiple forms of nature.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore she says that dispossession is an important element of privatisation but that it is necessary to focus on how the both owners and non-owners become market subjects. The consequences are multidimensional as “privatization does not simply mark an institutional shift, but instead entails a more fundamental restructuring of political-economic and nature-society relations, including people’s senses of themselves as subjects (e.g. subject as owner).”<sup>18</sup> For instance, privatisation calls for the logic of efficiency, which becomes self-imposed on both the owner and non-owner. When nature is turned into private property and commodified as a market good, this process imposes and simultaneously transforms conceptions of nature as well as ways of being and relating to one another and the environment. It is not only that people in a society are alienated from each other and nature, but also that the way we conceive of the world is altered.

By examining Hardin’s tragedy of the commons with regards to the ocean and fishing we reveal some of the assumptions that have informed an approach to—and conception of—the relationship between nature and society. These assumptions have reinforced an idea that society is essentially individualistic, economically driven and human-centred. However, as Merchant shows, this is not historically accurate.

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “Guidelines on the Use of Market-based Instruments to Address the Problem of Marine Litter,” by P Ten Brink, I Lutchman, S Bassi, S Speck, S Sheavly, K Register, and C Woolaway (Brussels: Institute for European Environmental Policy): 2009, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Mansfield, “Privatization,” 394.

<sup>17</sup> Mansfield, “Privatization,” 393. Mansfield draws on the work of Karen Bakker to argue that privatisation transforms society-nature relationships in three predominant ways: (1) it “sparks and creates powerful opposition and resistance” to the privatisation of nature; (2) “property transforms people’s relationship to themselves, others and nature through ownership and market discipline” and (3) “privatization is remaking of nature-society relations as property.”

<sup>18</sup> Mansfield, “Privatization,” 396.

### 2.3.2 *Merchant on the tragedy of the commons*

Merchant locates Hardin's tragedy of the commons within a broader historical perspective and places it within *laissez-faire* capitalism of the seventeenth century and the Christian ethic that posited human domination over nature. She argues that it "dovetails with the Judeo-Christian mandate of Genesis 1:28 – be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it."<sup>19</sup> The foundation of these ideas rests on the assumption that both the economic model of capitalism and human domination of nature are natural. Hardin takes for granted the ideas of mechanistic nature declared by Francis Bacon and which is also evident in Hobbes' political thought.<sup>20</sup>

Merchant argues that this type of perspective reflects an egocentric attitude toward nature. This egocentric perspective draws on Hobbes's idea that the natural state of people is competitive, hostile and violent.<sup>21</sup> According to Hobbes, "nature has given all to all," therefore giving everyone equal rights to nature. It is important to note, however, that here a reading "all to all" is understood as an equal right to take from nature, hence favouring whoever gets there first. It is this understanding and argument, according to Merchant, that "legitimises laissez faire capitalism."<sup>22</sup> For Hardin, the commons are thus a free market that requires coercion and rules.<sup>23</sup>

Merchant examines Hardin's fishing example and identifies at least six assumptions underpinning it. First, his argument is based on the idea that "what is good for the individual is good for society as a whole."<sup>24</sup> This implies that he assumes the individual good is the highest good. Second, he argues that "fish were ultimately passive objects" and "as commodities to be extracted from the state of nature, they could be turned into profit. Like the gold that had been discovered in California, fish were treated as gold nuggets, serving as the coin of trade."<sup>25</sup> Third, he assumes that nature is passive and that its value is only monetary and external. Fourth, the idea that once nature is taken it becomes private property. Hence once fish were caught from the commons they automatically become owned.<sup>26</sup> This reinforces the idea that anything gained by your labour becomes your property. Fifth, he takes on a

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<sup>19</sup> Carolyn Merchant, "Environmental Ethics and Political Conflict: A View from California," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 47.

<sup>20</sup> Merchant, "Environmental Ethics," 47-49.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>24</sup> Merchant, "Fish First!," 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

perspective that bifurcates human and non-human, thus separating society and nature. Lastly, Hardin's assumption is that human nature is competitive and capitalist in nature. This reinforces the idea that private ownership is best. Furthermore, it assumes that collective ways of organisation are futile and will lead to ecological destruction.

Monica Chilese discusses the “fount and scourge of ocean life”, describing how enclosures must be located within a historical context. She states that “after a long period during which human beings lived in equilibrium with nature, capable of using its fruits without impoverishing it and without altering its habitats, we are now suffering from the illusion that man is the master of creation and not its guardian.”<sup>27</sup> She starkly shows how Hardin's tragedy of the commons has contributed to the demise of the ocean. According to Chilese, “our domination of nature means that the cosmos is reduced to a usable object, to the service of a cultural animal that takes the liberty to ignore its rules.”<sup>28</sup> Both Merchant and Chilese argue that the tragedy from a historical perspective is not the communal commons but instead the enclosures and erasures of the social, ecological, political and social ecologies that sustained communities yet are now plundered and exploited.

Merchant's work on *Reinventing Eden* demonstrates that, today, a lack of historical perspective has given rise to approaches that seek to recover narratives – be they of restoration or decline.<sup>29</sup> The recovery narrative stymies alternatives and the necessary intellectual tools for conceiving of another relationship with nature. Therefore, it is frequently evident “the mainstream story of the Recovery of Eden through modern science, technology and capitalism is perhaps the most powerful narrative in Western culture.”<sup>30</sup> A key weakness of that narrative is that it puts its faith in science and hence holds an unexamined belief in modernity and progress. Modern science and technology are portrayed as neutral and a universal remedy to solve any problem. Hardin's tragedy of the commons fits into this narrative. He locates his narrative within a linear and positivist storyline, devoid of complexity and suggestive of a society where things have clear beginnings and conclusions in which private property and market relations are the solution for development problems.

However, according to Merchant, environmentalist and feminist scholars also

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<sup>27</sup> Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Monica Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean: Enclosure, Commons, and the Global Fisherman's Movement* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2014), 18.

<sup>28</sup> Dalla Costa and Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, 36.

reflect the recovery narrative in their analysis; thus it is both mainstream and dissident. The recovery narrative used by dissidents is referred to as a counter-narrative. They describe a decline, rather than a restoration, of nature. An overarching argument used is that the environment is plundered and destroyed as the result of human expansion and greed. The way back to the pristine wilderness is through an environmental movement which calls for ecological justice and sustainability. Within a feminist perspective, the decline occurred because female nature was “once revered as mother [but is] now scarred, desecrated, and abused, and women [are] the victims of patriarchal culture.”<sup>31</sup> Within a postcolonial perspective, the decline is a result of raiding and occupying indigenous people’s lands. Merchant argues that “even as they call for new pathways to a just society, these counter stories of a slide downward (or declension) from Eden buy into the overarching, metanarrative of recovery. Both storylines, whether upward or downward, compel us to find a new story for the twenty-first century.”<sup>32</sup>

These counter-narratives, according to Merchant, idealise the past. There is a refrain of returning to nature and the past is understood as a place of utopia. She further argues that many feminists who adopt the declension narrative stop at a gendered analysis. Absent are analyses about how to address racial divisions as well as class inequalities that exist in society. Merchant also argues that it is also not clear from the environmentalist narrative what conservation would mean and how exactly the pristine wilderness would be reclaimed. The declension and restoration implications of the recovery narrative result in an impasse. Merchant argues that if “played out to its logical conclusion, each narrative negates human life: the mainstream story leads to a totally artificial earth; the environmental story leads to a depopulated earth.”<sup>33</sup>

By using an historical approach, both Merchant and Mansfield are able to respond to Hardin’s tragedy of the commons by showing how regulation, governance and management of nature were simultaneously part of a larger process which altered human relations with one another as well as with nature.

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<sup>31</sup> Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 3.

## 2.4 Two logics of society and nature – Princen on efficiency and sufficiency

The framework of the tragedy of the commons as set out by Hardin is the dominant worldview. His work rests on assumptions set out above and challenged by Merchant. The foundational work done by Thomas Princen helps us to understand the specific logic of society held by Hardin and other neoclassical economists. More so, he suggests an alternative logic for society, offering tools and principles to envisage and practise a different relationship between society and nature.

Princen distinguishes between two logics of society. Specifically, he looks at the ideas of efficiency and sufficiency. In *The Logic of Sufficiency and Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order*, Princen shows how society lives beyond the ecological limits for sustainability and uses numerous examples to illustrate alternatives to the dominant logic of efficiency that exist and are possible. Efficiency is a human concept and thus a result of particular processes and worldview. The examples he gives of sufficiency suggest a different way to address the ecological limits that confront us today.

### 2.4.1 The logic of efficiency

Outlining various elements of the logic of efficiency, Princen shows how it has evolved over time. During the Middle Ages its meaning was understood as effectiveness and purpose in accomplishing a task with specific reference to mechanical and physical actions.<sup>34</sup> Some three centuries later, in the eighteenth century, with the invention of the steam engine, rapid advances in theories of science and expanding market systems, its meaning changed. These events occurred parallel to a shift from a craft-based industry and barter systems of exchange to monetary markets for labour, land and capital.<sup>35</sup> Efficiency soon became explained by or measured with mathematical equations and a conversion occurred

from a qualitative notion to a quantitative one. No longer denoting the accomplishment of a worthy task, the tight fit of means and ends, it would now become a quantitative measure of how well a task is performed, of how well measurable economic inputs are used to generate

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 53.

measurable economic outputs ... how a producer employed raw material, how a consumer satisfied demand, and how society generated wealth.<sup>36</sup>

Rapid industrialisation and the rise of a capitalist economy resulted in rapid production, economies of scale and a market of supply and demand. The logic and language of efficiency – so many units produced in so many hours, yielding so much profit – came to mark this period. Princen argues that “Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, originally published in 1776, not only captured this move towards market-led industrial production, but simultaneously laid a conceptual foundation for a rationalised, productive economy.”<sup>37</sup> During this period two ideas emerged parallel to each other: the all-encompassing invisible hand of the market, and the economic mantra of efficiency.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century several challenges confronting a new idea of efficiency were overcome. The idea had evolved from effectiveness and purpose in completing a task with regards to mechanic and physical use to a specific economic meaning. Its new bases were scientific and quantitative.<sup>39</sup> It became associated with numerical and productive scale. According to Princen, this rapid evolution developed alongside two important historical processes at the end of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth centuries. The one was the construction of the idea of the economic man. This new man represented wealth, progress, rationality and modernity and was determined to cast-off the old, traditional and non-scientific practices.<sup>40</sup> The other process was the rise of the corporation that sought scale, mass distribution, expansion and vast extraction.<sup>41</sup> According to Princen, over a short period of time the logic of efficiency was completely stripped of its original social meaning and purpose. Neoclassical economists sought to create a “value-free, apolitical analysis in the quest for scientific and public legitimacy.”<sup>42</sup> This was done to foster an idea that “value has to somehow be converted into measurable quantity.”<sup>43</sup> Princen argues that Smith

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<sup>36</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 57–61.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 52–53.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 57.



elevated “efficiency to the status of economic and managerial principle and, eventually, to a broad social principle.”<sup>44</sup>

Princen shows how time and the notion of making every minute count became linked to production, growth and progress. Today, efficiency is “nearly synonymous with ‘productive’ or ‘useful’ even ‘good,’ efficiency has spilled into all realms of life ... It has become a social goal in its own right, equating with all that is desirable, and then used selectively to promote agendas often unrelated to true efficiency gains.”<sup>45</sup>

This ascendancy of efficiency above other values is associated with capitalism. Underlying this logic of efficiency are practices of wealth accumulation and profiteering and an entire set of assumptions about a logic of the economy, the market and society. From this logic arises the belief that nature would best be managed by market mechanisms. This faith in the logic of efficiency is closely interwoven with the idea that a good life is one in which one can consume endlessly.

It is this logic of efficiency that has underpinned the drive and ethos of privatisation, globalisation and the expansion of transnational corporations over many decades, all resting on enclosures, extraction and expansion. It requires the constant making and selling of goods and services, the search for new markets and the commodification of all aspects of life. Obscured and hidden by the language of efficiency, neoliberal globalisation and privatisation create never-ending overproduction, overconsumption and overexploitation in society. These processes create vast amounts of waste and deplete finite and limited resources. The skewed distribution and use of these ecological resources amongst and between countries and peoples is hidden. So too are unequal benefits from efficiency, privatisation and globalisation. This logic of efficiency, in part, contributes to societies with extreme income inequality.

The logic of efficiency conceives of nature only as a natural resource over which human beings have command. It works on the assumption that natural resources are limitless; where and when limits emerge, technology and science will be able to create alternatives. This logic assumes more is best, that boundless growth is equivalent to progress and advancement of society. Thus, this logic does not avert ecological crisis but instead hastens it.

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<sup>44</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 50.

Key for Princen is the necessity to understand that the “age of efficiency” is not universal or some perfect age-old notion, but that it is historically specific and evolved over time. The logic of efficiency emerged parallel to the rise of industrialisation and was influenced fundamentally by three primary institutions, namely the factory, the laboratory and the market. The aim of these institutions is to generate the highest throughput (amount of material or items passing through a system or process) in modern society. The logic of efficiency thus serves a political and economic purpose and is linked to a particular worldview. According to Princen, efficiency, like the idea of personal self-gain, must be understood from a historical perspective.

By making the logic of efficiency visible, my dissertation questions political, economic and social theories and their assumptions about nature. The ascendancy of the idea of efficiency, with its social and economic meaning of large quantities at the fastest rate and lowest costs, coincides with the conception of nature as passive, other and for the advancement of society. It is the constant call by proponents of neoliberalism over the past fifty or so years for efficient and sustainable use of natural resources that has exacerbated the ill health of the environment. It is now necessary to call for an alternative such as the logic of *sufficiency* within the context of the ecological crisis, which can posit a new approach to nature.

#### **2.4.2    *The logic of sufficiency***

Princen argues that we require new concepts for a different society, which are premised on the recognition of limited resources and ecological decline. This alternative society would not be based on principles of material wealth, profit making or the logic of efficiency. He argues that society requires ideas, which call into question excessiveness and boundless production.<sup>46</sup> Importantly he points, out “that what we take for normal is actually excess,” and suggests that we “adopt sufficiency (or something like it) as a political tool.”<sup>47</sup>

Princen argues that “we need language that enables living with, not living *against* nature” and he challenges us to imagine and create a different society, which would overcome the multiple crises in our current society.<sup>48</sup> In particular, he focuses

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Princen, *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 2-5.

<sup>47</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 55, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Princen, *Treading Softly*, 12.

on the intersection of ecological and moral crises. As described above, a dominant idea in society is efficiency, which is essential for the current functioning of the current paradigm. The idea of progress is equated with growth that posits access, mobility and convenience as the highest ideals. Other important ideas of moderation, solidarity and community are subordinated and this is not by chance. Princen asks us to examine the new language and concepts that have been created to foster this particular worldview.<sup>49</sup> He argues that today the “fundamental biophysical shifts require fundamental social shifts.”<sup>50</sup> In an ecologically constrained society, Princen argues that the logic of efficiency needs to be subordinate to new managing principles which do not promote more as good, but rather bring into closer focus what is enough. He suggests the idea of sufficiency as one such common sense and intuitive principle. Similar ideas of being mindful as well as adaptive to ecological limits exist historically.

Princen stressed that “[s]ufficiency principles such as restraint, respite, precaution, polluter pays, zero, and reverse onus have the virtue of partially resurrecting well established notions such as moderation and thrift, ideas that have never completely disappeared.”<sup>51</sup> We need all these ideas but they run the risk of being displaced because modern society does not reward reduced throughput; it demands endless output.<sup>52</sup> Modern society demands endless consumption, associating wanting, buying and having more with the good life. This good life aspires to the notion that money can buy convenience, choice and happiness.

By looking at various examples in the form of case studies, Princen explains how “choice was not one of indulgence versus abstinence or convenience versus hardship. From the Pacific Lumber Company, Monhegan Lobstering, and the Toronto Island Project, it becomes apparent that enough was a ‘first best’ choice, not second best, not a concession, not a sacrifice.”<sup>53</sup> He argues how enough, the idea of sufficiency, is ecologically rational. He demonstrates how communities can and do exercise restraint, follow principles of sufficiency and act collectively and in solidarity to ensure nature’s well-being as well as that of the individual and community.

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<sup>49</sup> Princen, *Treading Softly*, 157.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>51</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2.

Princen draws on the principle which takes into account the real limits of the environment as well as the real needs - not wants - of people. In so doing, he seeks to illustrate that there are alternatives to the over-consumption that is too much for “our social fabric or health of our planet.” He argues that

... sufficiency as a principle aimed at ecological overshoot compels decision makers to ask when too much resources use or too little regeneration jeopardizes important values such as ecological integrity and social cohesion; when material gains now preclude material gains in the future; when consumer gratification or investor rewards threatens economic security; when benefits internalized depend on costs externalized.<sup>54</sup>

By so doing, he posits critical questions about what can ensure future ecological well-being.

In order to create a different way of relating to natural resources, Princen suggests different forms of organisations, as well as new principles and ideas that will limit excessive production and consumption. He argues that the old principles at best are problematic. These include extracting raw materials rapidly and thoroughly (the efficiency principle); converting those materials into products that people will buy (the consumer-rule principle); creating markets everywhere (the growth principle); disposal of the wastes in the least costly, least visible manner possible (again, the efficiency principle, along with the out-of-sight-out-of-mind principle); and doing more and more of all of this faster and faster, cheaper and cheaper (the growth, efficiency and cheaper-is-better principles).<sup>55</sup> They rest on late twentieth-century free trade principles of liberalisation, deregulation and multilateralism that replaced the mercantile principles of protections and differential trade agreements of the early twentieth century.<sup>56</sup>

Princen argues that implementing the abovementioned principles has created the current ecological crisis. He goes on to say that we need to develop new principles to enable a different way of living with nature, that “we need principles that fit the needs of the times – namely living on the regenerative capacity of current resources and waste sinks ... principles which are ‘ecological consonant’.”<sup>57</sup> The four principles

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<sup>54</sup> Princen, *Logic of Sufficiency*, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Princen, *Treading Softly*, 67–68.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 65–66.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 69. Original emphasis.

suggested as alternatives by Princen are the principles of intermittency, sufficiency, capping and source and they are intended to limit excess and are based on what humanity needs, not wants.

The intermittency principle is premised on conservation and the idea that we do not require energy all the time as if it were unlimited. Similarly, the principle of sufficiency forces us to ask ourselves what is enough and what is “too-muchness.” In other words, “it is *doing well by doing a little less than the most possible*,” thus acting with restraint and within ecological capacity so that there is enough for later.<sup>58</sup> None of this implies not having; rather it implies not having something all of the time and having sufficient for one’s needs.

The capping principle is not driven by economic interest but acts to ensure that “regenerative capacities” of the ecosystem are maintained.<sup>59</sup> Caps on energy, production of goods and services, food, consumptions, farming, harvesting etc., are all necessary to ensure safety and well-being.<sup>60</sup> It is not complicated: a cap is the same principle as a speed limit. For instance, we know that driving above the speed limits is a hazard to other motorists. It makes no sense that cars should be able to reach speeds above 120 km per hour if the maximum speed is below that. Hence, cars should be manufactured with a speed limit capacity that can only reach 120 km per hour; more than that is too much.

The source principle ensures that the source is protected against extinction or complete depletion of natural resources. Princen’s argument is that if we destroy the source such as “a river’s headwaters, a grassland’s soil, a reef’s coral, a forest’s seed trees, a fishery’s spawning ground, a grain’s genetic stock, an atmosphere’s chemical integrity” then we have lost entire species and will be unable to reproduce what is lost for the generations that follow.<sup>61</sup>

Princen’s work draws our attention to the specificities of the logic of efficiency, which had become prevalent by the end of twentieth century. This logic of efficiency, he explains, has become invisible although it drives all aspects of today’s society. It is the principles behind the logic of efficiency that contribute to disharmony between

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<sup>58</sup> Princen, *Treading Softly*, 65–66.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 74–75.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 76.

society and nature. By making visible the logic of efficiency, Princen helps us conceive of a different logic and suggests a way to develop alternative principles, a language and a way of being in the world that recognises the importance of a society where “enough” is best and first prize. His work shows us an alternative that does not call for a return to the past or to nature; instead his examples show how the logic of sufficiency is part of the present as well as a transition to a different society.

The four principles outlined by Princen can be seen as guidelines for individuals or communities, but can also be seen as steps toward an alternative relationship between nature and society, established through such concrete steps. It does not require human absorption into the realm of nature, and is compatible with human use of nature for its own needs. The extraction and use of natural resources is guided by principles of stewardship, rather than the quest for competitive profit.

This raises the question of whether Princen’s principles can be realised broadly within the context of capitalism. Can you, for example, respect the principle of preserving the source and compete successfully in a capitalist economy? In some cases it may be possible, but my view is that, on the whole, you cannot. Others have made this argument and I will do so here. The point I want to make is that, as with the establishment of the dominant relationship of nature and society, the establishment of an alternative is a process. We can see Princen’s examples as indicating routes which that process can take. It may be more difficult to see the struggles of landless people or fishing communities or mining-affected communities in South Africa in a similar light, as parts of a process of establishing that alternative. But that is what is attempted in the chapters that follow.

## **2.5 Arguments for a different nature before the ecological crisis – Gandhi and Schumacher**

Below are two brief examples of critiques of modernity as part of a broad tradition of alternatives. In both examples it would be a mistake to misread their critiques of Western civilisation and modernity as suggesting a return to traditional feudalism or backwardness or any other part of the past. Rather, both Gandhi and Schumacher present us with visions for an alternative society. Gandhi, in his writing, presented us with his image of a metaphoric village. Schumacher offered the idea of Buddhist economics and the concept of “Right Livelihoods.” Their writings represent the emergence of a range of arguments which contained visions of alternatives to

modernity and also discussed another conception of nature, work and relations which aimed at living a good life based on notions of “enough is as good as a feast”, simplicity and reciprocity. Their ideas were presented many years before the current ecological crisis was placed on the global agenda.

In Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1909, he launched a critique against Western civilisation and specifically called into question the ills and consequences of automation, modernisation and urbanisation. Gandhi found it abhorrent that wealth and riches were conceived of as civilisation in place of “that mode of conduct which points to man the path of duty” and “good conduct.”<sup>62</sup> He observed that the ancestors “dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasure” and “they saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of our hands and our feet.”<sup>63</sup> For Gandhi the process that sought to “make bodily welfare the object of life” needed to be challenged and exposed. He argued that “thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines,” describing “[t]heir condition [as] worse than that of beast.”<sup>64</sup> He further noted that “[t]hey are obliged to work, at their risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires.”<sup>65</sup>

In an important exchange with Nehru, Gandhi wrote:

If India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also...people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces ... I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realise truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life.... You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. The village of my dreams is still in my mind. ...My village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. ...There will be neither plague, nor cholera nor smallpox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour.... It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph offices etc.<sup>66</sup>

The exchange clearly shows that it would be a misreading to understand Gandhi’s critique of Western civilisation as a call to return to something long gone or abandon the advances made by Western civilisation. Instead he sets forth and makes clear the

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<sup>62</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>63</sup> Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 68–69.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 150–151.

trappings of Western civilisation and to some extent reveals the contradictions and costs of civilisation.

Terchek argues that Gandhi “launches a broad indictment on modernity and modernisation to expose them as constructions that come with heavy and often hidden costs.”<sup>67</sup> It is the materialism implied in “increased production and technological innovation” that are “the emblems of modernity” which, according to Gandhi, breaks down community and fractures society, high costs to pay.<sup>68</sup> Terchek notes that “the modern society that Gandhi surveys has become a place where efficiencies overwhelm individuals, the household is under siege, artificialities abound, nothing is fixed and social practices and moral principles are increasingly uncomplimentary and often contradictory. In such a world, he finds people are lost, and wants to provide them with materials that serve as a guide.”<sup>69</sup> His approach is not an attempt at a blueprint or at providing a definitive alternative, but rather one of reflecting upon and revealing the costs of modernity.

Schumacher suggested an alternative to modernisation that would avoid “materialist heedlessness and traditional immobility.”<sup>70</sup> His essay on “Buddhist Economics,” written in 1966 and later published in 1973 in *Small is Beautiful*, is another example of the approach explored in my dissertation. In his compelling argument about “Right Livelihood” he said that

[b]efore they dismiss Buddhist economics as nothing better than a nostalgic dream, they might wish to consider whether the path of economic development outlined by modern economics is likely to lead them to places where they really want to be ... As far as the masses are concerned, the results appear to be disastrous – a collapse of the rural economy, a rising tide of unemployment in town and country, and the growth of a city proletariat without nourishment for either body or soul.<sup>71</sup>

Buddhist economics places meaningful work at the centre of an alternative society aimed to enliven people, build community, instil discipline and build character. In so doing, the aim is that we work not to consume excessively, but to earn

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<sup>67</sup> Ronald J. Terchek, *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 78.

<sup>68</sup> Terchek, *Gandhi*, 80–81.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–97.

<sup>70</sup> Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), 66.

<sup>71</sup> Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 65.



sufficiently so as to enjoy leisure and creativity. To consume and to merely have more is not a good life. Instead a good life is one in which “amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfactory results.”<sup>72</sup> According to Schumacher, “consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption.”<sup>73</sup> He added that local products should be prioritised over imports and use of resources should be made with mindfulness. Specifically, he said that “non-renewable goods must be used only if they are indispensable, and then only with the greatest care and most meticulous concern for conservation. To use them heedlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence.”<sup>74</sup>

By briefly outlining the ideas of Gandhi and Schumacher, which were put forward in different historical periods, I am reinforcing my argument about the possibility of an alternative relationship to nature and other conceptions of a good life. I argue that neither Gandhi’s nor Schumacher’s conceptions of a flourishing society are compatible with a logic of efficiency. To advance this argument, I have drawn on the work of Carolyn Merchant, showing how using an historical approach unearths important dimensions of the ecological crisis and its historical linkages to assist in seeing alternatives. I have also drawn on Thomas Princen’s work to show a concrete way to reconceptualise how we relate to nature with material effect. The purpose is to help shed light, in part, on what obscures alternative thinking with regard to the ecological crisis.

As with Princen, it is possible to raise the question of whether Gandhi’s or Schumacher’s principles could be broadly realised within capitalism. Similarly, it is not necessary to begin with a complete blueprint for an alternative society, although that kind of project has its own place and value. We can see their arguments, instead, as steps towards an alternative relationship between nature and society and hence an alternative society. They help us see how nature and society mutually constitute each other. In that sense, they show that another nature is possible.

## **2.6 Making another nature visible**

In referring to this broader tradition of alternatives, I am illustrating ideas about the possibility of another nature, a different relationship with nature. To help imagine

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<sup>72</sup> Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 60.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 64.

another relationship with nature, my dissertation sets out to reveal the assumptions behind various ecological discourses and policies. Sometimes those who deploy discourses and lobby for policies are aware of such assumptions. However, in general, most underlying assumptions are adopted unknowingly and remain unexamined by the public. When policies are crafted they often maintain existing systems rather than effect any meaningful and fundamental changes. The act of making visible is an approach intended to reveal and unearth these assumptions and peel away at conceptions that are taken as normal and given. It is an approach that aims to undermine current systems and bring new possibilities to the fore. In this context, the dissertation shows the dominant conception of nature and the assumptions that underpin this and the society it produces.

The act of making visible is my attempt to move beyond critiques, which debunk policies but still favour the worldview in which nature is a passive object. I draw on a historical perspective to show that there are – and have been – different conceptions of the relationship between society and nature over time. Critically, the dissertation aims to make visible how nature and society are inextricably linked: they are two parts of the same whole, as society affects and is affected by nature. I try to show how ideas have real material consequences. For example, the act of “making visible” by the scholars I have cited, shows that thinking that the tragedy of the commons was as a result of “open access” led to physical enclosures of land and privatisation of nature. This changed society dramatically. But to make visible is also to show how the material consequences of enclosures led to the widespread inability to feed one’s family.

By exposing the existing assumptions, the dissertation shows how language is laden with ideas and values and is not neutral. Evolving new language and articulations is critical in a project of changing ideas. Giving fresh meanings or reclaiming words like “commons” or conceptions of the “tragedy of the commons” can evoke changed ideas and create a basis for imagining alternatives.

The possibility of another nature in South Africa involves unveiling the deceptions and hidden assumptions of post-apartheid South African ecological discourse. The dissertation shows how liberation ideology adopted various ideals of Western civilisation such as modernity, progress, liberal democracy, industrialisation, the exploitation of natural resources and economic development, in unexamined ways. By

taking on these ideals and incorporating them into ANC-led policy, the new dispensation's purpose for delivery undermined real economic, social and political transformation.

Making visible another relationship to nature means describing and exposing how racial dispossession continues in the new dispensation. The dissertation reveals how the South African government uses racial rhetoric and the discourse of racial redress to obscure its actual reinforcement of historical social relations of exploitation and oppression. I describe how the acts of transforming the commons and the relationships of communal care into private ownership and market-based relations have resulted in racial dispossession. However, I also explain how attempts at reclaiming the commons with calls for ownership of and control over them, can still result in a continuation of, instead of a break with, harmful modern conceptions of nature.

Lastly, making visible the possibility of another nature and society is done to show that the ecological crisis is a crisis of unequal social relations. It depends on the devaluation of women's invisible and poorly paid work, the exploitation of paid labour and the continued division between the "haves" and the "have-nots." It is a crisis that depends on the subsidisation of reproductive work done by women and productive work done by the working class. It is about capitalist accumulation processes and the logics that underpin them. It fundamentally depends on keeping these dependencies invisible and hidden. By "making visible" another nature my dissertation shows that the ecological crisis is overtly social and political.

## Chapter Three: Land Racialised – Making Land as Nature Invisible

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that much of the debate on the politics of land in South Africa does not foreground a conception of land as part of nature. It furthermore seeks to explain the reason for this conceptual shortcoming. The chapter argues that the work of Sol Plaatje has left an imprint on how land is conceived of today.<sup>1</sup> It traces the way his ill-fated demand for land as private property has shaped the post-apartheid land policy as well as influenced contemporary calls for the deracialisation of land ownership.

Given the ecological crisis confronting society, the chapter argues it is critical that engagements on the politics of land bring to the fore that land as part of nature and intrinsic to social relations – not only as a natural resource to dominate, extract and control. Making this visible brings to the fore the social relations that have been transformed by the separation of land and people over time. This chapter seeks to show that the call for the deracialisation of land ownership will neither automatically re-connect people to land, nor will it reconceptualise land beyond private property.

### 3.2 The land question at an impasse

The land question in South Africa is a deeply contentious issue and the existing land reform debate continues to stand at an impasse.<sup>2</sup> This is despite the important symbolic project that deracialisation of land ownership represents in the post-apartheid period.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1994, the approach adopted by the democratically elected government has not resolved the land question. If anything, there is a worsening land crisis such that Stephen Greenberg has argued that land tenure and security has been the most

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<sup>1</sup> Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa: Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion*, iBook edition.

<sup>2</sup> By the term “land question” I refer to racially-skewed distribution, use and allocation of land in the country. Arguments about the impasse can be found in Fred Hendricks, Lungisile Ntsebeza and Kirk Helliker, “The Land Question in South Africa,” in *The Promise of Land: Undoing A Century of Dispossession in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013), 1. Also see Ruth Hall, “Introduction,” in *Another Countryside? Policy Options for Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa* (Bellville: PLAAS, 2009), 1.

<sup>3</sup> In 1994, 87% of land was owned by white people, and 13% by black people. According to Walker and Dubb, “[i]n the early 1990s just under 60 000 white-owned farms accounted for about 70% of the total area of the country. Today there are under 40 000 farming units covering about 67% of the country,” per Stats SA 2009.

retarded aspect of land policy. According to him, “post-apartheid land reform has been reduced to a market-based process of deracialising land ownership, without disturbing markets or destabilising the political and social climate.”<sup>4</sup> Ruth Hall further highlights, “experience to date has shown that land reform has tended to reproduce the large-scale model of farming, with similar forms of production pursued.”<sup>5</sup> Her study concludes that “[i]f land reform is to address the political imperative of changing racially skewed patterns of land ownership and the economic imperative of reducing poverty, it must both redistribute and maintain or increase production.”<sup>6</sup>

The Inyanda Declaration states, “nearly twenty years after the end of apartheid, the 1913 Natives’ Land Act continues to haunt the countryside.”<sup>7</sup> The declaration goes further to note that “the land question, which was so central to the struggle against apartheid, remains unresolved. Millions of South Africans continue to be dispossessed of their lands, and the rural geography of apartheid (bantustans and white South Africa) continues to exist.”<sup>8</sup> In order to move beyond the current land impasse, *The Promise of Land* asks, “[w]hat should be done to correct the racist injustices of the colonial past in respect of land ownership and access?”<sup>9</sup>

According to Hendricks et al., everyone agrees that land reform is needed but beyond that is where the challenge lies. They set out five main areas of disagreement in the land reform debate. First, “how much land should be transferred to black people.” Second, “how quickly should it be done?” Third, should land reform be done “via the market based system or expropriation?” Fourth, “whether expropriation should be with or without compensation,” and finally, “how this compensation should be determined.”<sup>10</sup>

There appears however to be no disagreement about how land is conceived of in the debate. All the disagreements outlined by Hendricks et al. assume the dominant

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen Greenberg, “The Landless People’s Movement and the Failure of Post-apartheid Land Reform,” case study for the University of KwaZulu-Natal project entitled Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa (University of KwaZulu-Natal: Centre for Civil Society and the School of Development Studies, 2004), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Hall, *Another Countryside: Policy Options for Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa* (Cape Town: PLAAS, 2009), 55–56.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, *Another Countryside*, 55–56.

<sup>7</sup> Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), “Declaration of December 2014” in *The National Land Movement Launch Report* (Mowbray: TCOE, 2015), 52.

<sup>8</sup> TCOE, “Inyanda Declaration,” 52.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Hendricks, Lugisile Ntsebeza and Kirk Helliker, *The Promise of Land: Undoing a Century of Dispossession in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013), 47.

<sup>10</sup> Hendricks et al., *Promise of Land*, 47.

conception of land as private property and object, even if there is recognition of dispossession and exploitation of land. Much of the literature suggests that a central disagreement in the debate about land reform rests upon upholding the rule of law, the constitution and in particular, the private property clause.

According to William Beinart and Peter Delius, “alienation of land from Khoisan and Africans to whites resulted from conquests in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, as settlers and colonial states expanded their authority into the interior of southern Africa.”<sup>11</sup> Beinart and Delius argue that “[t]his expansion involved both violence and legal measures: annexations, the survey and privatisation of land, and the establishment of a new colonial civil authority.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, certain conceptions of land are imprinted upon the South African landscape due to these processes.

The forced separation of people from land affected both land and people, and their relationship. Specifically, private ownership and enclosure of land and commons ascribed new value to land tied to material gain, efficiency, individual ownership, modernity, civilisation and citizenship. New forms of agricultural production as well as changing social relations accompanied these processes on the land. A shift occurred from subsistence farming, as the dominant form of agricultural activity, to commodity production for the economic market. This has, in turn, undermined over time, conceptions of land tied to collectivism, sufficiency, connectivity and solidarity.

This chapter argues that the deracialisation of land ownership does not automatically re-connect people and land, neither does it mean an end to land as private property, land exploitation, agricultural extractivism or farm worker exploitation and dehumanising conditions on farms. Instead, calls for deracialisation of land ownership often augment land as both private property and an economic resource in the new dispensation. In this chapter, I suggest that to begin to conceive of land beyond private property is to imagine and foster different conceptions of how we live with each other. Such a conception assumes that land is an essential part of the ecosystem, community and life and thus reasserts land as nature.

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<sup>11</sup> William Beinart and Peter Delius, “The Native Land Act of 1913: A Template But Not a Turning Point” in *Land Divided Land Restored: Land Reform in South Africa for the 21st Century*, ed. B Cousins and C Walker (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Beinart and Delius, “Native Land,” 25.

The dispossession of land is therefore more than separating people from land or taking it away; it is about altering society's way of conceiving of itself, our relationships with each other, and our relationship to and with nature. Specifically, the organic relationship between society and nature becomes alien and separate when land is primarily seen as separate, objectified and only as a natural resource for economic gain. Drawing on Merchant's argument in the previous chapter, the organic worldview comes to be replaced over time with a mechanistic view during the multiple and complex processes of the Scientific Revolution, hence today the domination over land is seen as normal. However, how nature - land in particular - is conceived of today is tied to conceptions of modernity espoused during the Scientific Revolution. This conception separates, in practice and theory, land as an intrinsic part of nature and ourselves.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.3 Separating land and people

Scholars such as Daniel Biebuyck, Ben Cousins and WJ du Plessis argue that pre-colonial African ideas about land were different from those espoused by philosophers and writers during the Scientific Revolution, particularly those of John Locke.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, the "concept of 'ownership' was limited in pre-colonial South Africa and more often embedded in status relationships."<sup>15</sup> According to du Plessis, "[t]he relationships between people were more important than an individual's ability to assert his or her interest in property against the world."<sup>16</sup> Significantly it seems that "[e]ntitlements to property were more in the form of obligations resulting from family relationships than a means to exclude people from the use of certain property."<sup>17</sup> From this analysis it appears that during the pre-modern period the idea of land as private property was not part of the pre-colonial fabric of South Africa, but was introduced through colonisation.

Much of the scholarly work, critical studies and analyses during the apartheid period did not necessarily focus on the changing conception of land per se, but were aimed at characterising the nature of land with regards to colonisation, the peasantry,

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<sup>13</sup> See Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 42–68.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Ben Cousins, "The Politics of Communal Tenure Reform: A South African Case Study" in *The Struggle Over Land in Africa*, ed. W Anseeuw and C Alden (Cape Town: HSRC, 2010), 110; WJ du Plessis, "African Indigenous Land Rights in a Private Ownership Paradigm," *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 14 (2011): 7, 49, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/pelj.v14i7.3>.

<sup>15</sup> du Plessis, "African Indigenous Land," 49.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

capitalism, segregation, labour, class formation, resistance and dispossession.<sup>18</sup> These analyses help us to understand how the dispossession of land was central to changing social relations over the past four centuries, the impact of land dispossession and the resulting Bantustans, dislocation of communities, migrant labour practices, as well as the spatial geographic segregation of South Africa. This literature fosters an appreciation for the implication and significance of separating land from people and the resulting legacy of inequality.<sup>19</sup>

Current land and agrarian reform discussions in South Africa focus on transformation, the right to land and land policy - issues of access, pace of redistribution and restitution, productivity, small-scale farmers and the agrarian question more broadly.<sup>20</sup> The contemporary politics of land debates focus the discussion within these confines. There is a limited focus on foregrounding land as nature, the bifurcation of society and nature, or the implications of this.<sup>21</sup> Land is mostly discussed and conceived of as a natural resource to which people have skewed access.

The focus on deracialising land ownership on the basis of capitalism, as encapsulated by the “willing seller, willing buyer” (WSWB) post-apartheid state policy, obscures a conception of land beyond deracialised private property. It blinds policy debates to issues of redistribution, restitution and tenure. The policy focus is technical and mainly examines the pace, extent, effectiveness, models and

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<sup>18</sup> See for instance Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1988.); William Beinart, Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Sampie Terreblanche, *History of Inequality in South Africa 1652–2002* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2002); Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Fani Ncapayi “Land and Changing Social Relations In South Africa’s Former Reserves: The Case Of Lumphaphasi In Sakhisizwe Local Municipality, Eastern Cape,” (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 2013), 162, 165.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Ben Cousins and Cherryl Walker, *Land Divided, Land Restored: Land Reform in South Africa for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015); Fred T Hendricks, Lungisile Ntsebeza and Kirk Helliker, *The Promise of Land: Undoing a Century of Dispossession in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013); Ruth Hall, *Another Countryside: Policy Options for the Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa* (Bellville: PLAAS/UWC, 2009); Lungisile Ntsebeza and Ruth Hall, *The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenges of Transformation and Redistribution* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007); among others. They do not engage in a discussion about land as part of nature in the broad sense. They tend to focus on the politics of land from the perspective of policy, access, human rights, injustice, memory, and reconciliation – all of which are crucial, but only advance particular aspects of the land question. These discussions appear to neglect the imperative that the ecological crisis imposes upon the land debate. Recent engagements by Andrews in the Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA) and the People’s Dialogue as well as Greenberg at ACB take into account the ecological crisis, climate change in particular. Fani Ncapayi’s study engages with land and the changing social relations on the former reserves.



appropriateness of land policy. This approach has failed dismally, thus being unable to move the land reform debate forward.

There is some research on land degradation, the effects of climate change on land and people, women and land tenure, farmworker rights on the farms, as well as the effects of mining on land and water.<sup>22</sup> Another focus of research examines the detrimental effects on land caused by commercial farming, genetically modified organisms (GMO), fertilisers and so on. Implicit in this research is the need to review how land is being used in society.

This chapter does not seek to engage in a discourse analysis on South African land policy nor engage in the political economy of land politics in the post-apartheid period. Rather it seeks to show *how the quest to deracialise land ownership on the basis of capitalism* came to be the focus of post-apartheid land politics. The aim is to show how this particular focus masks how land becomes and continues to be separated from nature and society. This particular framing of the land question in South Africa originates historically from the work of Sol Plaatje. His critique of the horrific effects of the 1913 Natives Land Act was brought alive when he wrote, “awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.”<sup>23</sup>

### **3.4 Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa* – an ill-fated demand for land as private property**

Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa* is one of “the first ‘political’ tracts written by an African writer” on the 1913 Land Act.<sup>24</sup> The work, published in 1916, addressed to the British Crown, requested the overturn of the 1913 Land Act and its accompanying Land Commission Report. The objection levelled by Plaatje at the 1913 Land Act was that black people were unfairly disadvantaged with the prohibition of owning and renting land. Specifically, he argued that it was unfair that black people could not

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<sup>22</sup> Over recent years, specifically leading up to the 2011 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17) in Durban, there has been significant engagement by NGOs and organisations such as the Association for Rural Advancement; the Trust For Community Outreach and Education; the Southern African Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA); GroundWork; Benchmarks; Women Affected by Mining, etc., to mention a few, who work with small-scale farmers, women on land and communities in rural areas.

<sup>23</sup> Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, iBook edition.

<sup>24</sup> Bhekizizwe Peterson, “Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa*: Melancholy Narratives, Petitioning Selves and the Ethics of Suffering,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43 (2008): 83, doi:10.1177/0021989407087826.

access and own *arable* land. He argued that the Crown should protect black-owned land and specifically the inheritance owed to black people.

Plaatje detested and challenged the Act that displaced and dispossessed black people of their homes and livelihoods and argued that the Act caused socio-economic and cultural destruction. The Act forced people into reserves and imposed anti-squatting laws that caused black people great losses in land, livestock and agriculture. Evictions forced black people to seek independent sources of livelihood and pushed them out of subsistence agriculture into mines and highly exploitative waged work. He felt that this was unjust and that it made no sense given the vast tracts of arable land available to whites and the overcrowding of the locations.

Prior to colonial rule, no such land law existed; members of the black elite were not excluded from land ownership or tenancy prior to the Act. This law stripped people of the ability to work the land communally and to sustain themselves as well as to continue to maintain aspects of their lives that were deeply connected to and rooted in the land. What became apparent to Plaatje was the disastrous effect the Act had on black people, creating inequity, injustice and needless suffering. With hindsight, we may say that Plaatje was not able to see that land as private property would result in processes of large-scale, modern and highly technical commercial farming or that over time, it would consequently create such impacts as soil erosion, water pollution and high carbon emissions, contributing to the ecological crisis. Similarly, we may say that he may not have foreseen proletarianisation with its complex processes and the impacts it would have on rural communities and social relations. What was not visible to Plaatje at the time was that the separation of people from the land through private property, ownership and commodification was in itself alienation. This is potentially understandable because Plaatje himself was not directly dependant on the land and lived at a distance from the mutual relationship between land and farmer.

Plaatje's study provides a substantial documentation of the realities of the period. It shows the hypocrisy and racism inherent in governmental actions at that time. Peterson notes that, "the African elite saw the mission of mastering reading and writing as involving much more than simply mimicking 'civilization' or writing

against discrimination or colonialism.”<sup>25</sup> In fact the “new African intelligentsia drew on their mastery of literacy and African orature in order to claim and defend their rights as modern citizens.”<sup>26</sup> According to Peterson, it is in this sense that Plaatje rejected the Act, as it sought to strip black people of their rights. His study, however, was unable to critically engage with settlers’ rights to land and private property per se. It could be said that the polemic of the period leads to a historical blind spot, hence his reluctant acceptance of British rule.

Plaatje’s work is powerful and shows a deep understanding of the inner workings of the colonial administration, its legal system and how to appeal to the sensibilities of the British yet still give weight to the pain, hardship and unfairness of the Act upon black people. Plaatje organised against the Land Act and saw it as an opportunity to unite all black people, elites, chiefs, peasants and urban workers alike. He sought to galvanise support against the Land Act as well as give voice to those affected by it, and recognised that “the Land Act threatened the interests and well-being of virtually every section of the African population. It thus provided an opportunity to cement social unity ... that the government could not overlook.”<sup>27</sup> He appealed to the Crown on the following basis:

- (1) The rights of loyal servants and subjects to the Crown were being violated;
- (2) An appeal to Christian beliefs;
- (3) An appeal to the ideals of modernity and civilisation;
- (4) An appeal to the morality and justice of the British parliament.

With hindsight, we might say that Plaatje did not see questions of alienation as a result of the Act and was less able to confront the notion that “capitalism, as a socio-economic system, is necessarily committed to racism and sexism.”<sup>28</sup> For Plaatje, freedom and prosperity came with modernity.

Peter Limb puts forward that, in Plaatje’s attempts “to appeal to the British public and government, he clearly identifies with what he sees as the democratic aspects of the Imperial mission but protests its exploitative and racist aspects.”<sup>29</sup> Plaatje understood the political task that he was undertaking by writing *Native Life*

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<sup>25</sup> Peterson, “Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life* in South Africa,” 80.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje, South African Nationalist, 1876–1932* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 161.

<sup>28</sup> Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Limb, “Rethinking Sol Plaatje’s Attitudes to Class, Empire, and Gender,” *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* 16 (2002): 28, doi:10.1080/02560240285310031.

and wrote that “mine is but a sincere narrative of a melancholy situation, in which, with all its shortcomings, I have endeavoured to describe the difficulties of the South African Natives under a very strange law, so as most readily to be understood by the sympathetic reader.”<sup>30</sup>

The inability to question the idea of private property or the dispossession of land prior to the Act or dispossession as critical for accumulation reflects unquestioned assumptions tied to notions of progress and modernity. It is for this reason that an historical overview of land dispossession is absent in Plaatje’s work and therefore understandable that he emphasises the 1913 Land Act as the single most important piece of legislation outlawing land ownership for black people, which had real consequences during the period in which he lived and wrote.

### **3.5 1913 Land Act – at the centre of dispossession**

Plaatje’s blind spot continues to linger in the politics of land today. His work is often used as a basis to understand the land question in South Africa, placing the 1913 Land Act at the centre of dispossession without questioning private property in and of itself.<sup>31</sup> As the first secretary-general of the ANC, Plaatje’s study laid the foundational analysis for, and is the genesis of land demands and land policies. According to Beinart and Delius, many of the analytical challenges within the current land debates in South Africa stem from Plaatje’s analysis. They argue, however, that the 1913 Land Act was not a turning point and the Act “itself has been exaggerated as an instrument of land dispossession or agrarian transformation.”<sup>32</sup>

Beinart and Delius argue that there was much land dispossession prior to the Act and that there was limited enforcement of the Act initially.<sup>33</sup> Many of the white farmers continued to use sharecropping and tenancy on their farms, as they could not afford paid labour and were dependent on black farmers. They claim that there were never white-only farms, but that the real impact of the Act lay in the fact that it legitimised the power of white farmers over black farmers.

For the purposes of my argument, the important point is that the 1913 Land Act sought to solidify both the agricultural and mineral capitalist revolution in South Africa and mirrors the consequences of the Scientific Revolution despite occurring

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<sup>30</sup> Plaatje, *Native Life*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> See comment by Beinart and Delius, “Native Land,” 28.

<sup>32</sup> Beinart and Delius, “Native Land,” 39.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–25.

centuries later. The 1913 Act legitimised control of people over nature and therefore conceptualised and legalised the private ownership of land. This process significantly altered social relations on the land. Simultaneously, dispossession meant more than an accumulation system; it also conceived of land differently than before.

The potential significance of different emphases with regard to the 1913 Land Act is that they neglected to engage with the right to land ownership and private property per se – be it by settlers or indigenous peoples. For the purpose of this dissertation, it is useful to note that the question of the hypocrisy and racism of the British colony is central to Plaatje. It is this injustice that became the preoccupation of the early ANC.

Jacob Dlamini's work helps to understand why an engagement with private property per se cannot be found in the work of Plaatje or others during that period, in spite of their sharp critique of the Land Act.<sup>34</sup> Dlamini shows how the African elite at the time understood their rights as educated black men in colonial society. According to Dlamini, "they were among the pioneers of a modernising South Africa. They were African, it is true, but they were also modern subjects, who brought with them a radical appreciation of landownership."<sup>35</sup>

Drawing on archival material of 1904, Dlamini shows, through an exchange which occurs between Godfrey Lagden, the Commissioner of Native Affairs in the Transvaal, and a group of eleven "exempted natives," the context the African elite found themselves in.<sup>36</sup> According to the law, these black men were exempted from the laws which affected black people, they were elite and allowed upward mobility as long as they pledged themselves to the Crown.<sup>37</sup> Dlamini writes that one of them, Tantsi, responds to Lagden after a series of questions regarding their rights to buy land, saying, "I think you must sympathise with us who are in a fix. Other people are buying land and buying it right away and you say we are to keep quiet and look on."<sup>38</sup> Tantsi further adds, "[t]he time will come when no native will be able to buy here. When we see a chance of buying land we know we cannot reside in the clouds, we

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<sup>34</sup> Jacob Dlamini, "The Land and Its Languages: Edward Tsewu and the Pre-History of the 1913 Land Act," in *Land Divided Land Restored: Land reform in South Africa for the 21st century*, ed. B. Cousins and C. Walker (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015), 50–52.

<sup>35</sup> Dlamini, "Land and Its Languages," 52.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

must live here on the ground and build our houses.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Dlamini, “[i]n the rejoinder we see an engagement with spatial and temporal concerns that were, at the heart of the debates about what it meant to be modern in southern Africa at the turn of the twentieth century.”<sup>40</sup> Specifically, Dlamini argues that “[i]t was the here and now of a modernizing and capitalist South Africa, in which property ownership was seen, by some, as a passage to citizenship.”<sup>41</sup> Tantsi, according to Dlamini, “could see the changes taking place all around them and they wanted to be an active part of the new world coming into being.”<sup>42</sup>

Educated at Lovedale and similar missionary schools, these black men fought against the 1913 Land Act. The outright legal denial of land to black people was an affront. During this period we see the establishment of what would become the national liberation movement. Plaatje’s political influence increased along with his initial policy formulations on land. These processes culminated in the launch of the Freedom Charter in 1955 in Kliptown. It is without a doubt that Plaatje’s work brings to the fore the changing relationship and consequence of the 1913 Land Act upon black people and the land. It is however, the focus on racism and white supremacy that makes invisible the ill-fated demand for land as private property.

### **3.6 Inyanda’s new imagination**

This demand for land as private property and for the deracialisation of private property continues to this day. The spectrum of those making the demand is diverse and extends from different ends of the political poles, from neoliberals and nationalists to progressives and radicals.

The focus on transferring land rights with the view to deracialising private property ownership means that the debate has lost sight of an important discussion with regard to the type of land production models and structures necessary to sustain and restore both society and nature at large. This conceptual inattention has the potential to reinforce land as an economic and political instrument, thus obscuring conceptions of land within a broader framework and as part of nature. An approach of foregrounding land as nature could offer a necessary and important opportunity to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 46–47.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

move beyond the current ineffectual land policy towards meaningful transformation. Some scholarly work refers to the under-utilisation of land post-settlement, but there is limited discussion about how and to what extent we need to use land.

The Inyanda (United) National Land Movement suggests a radical change to the politics of land in the country and argues that “the struggle for transformation must be based on a new imagination; on the total re-configuration of South Africa that re-connects the urban and rural areas and breaks down the racialised apartheid countryside. This re-configuration must ensure the humanity and dignity of all South Africans.”<sup>43</sup> This movement envisions that “those who want land for their own livelihoods should take priority over those who want land for accumulation and profit.”<sup>44</sup> Significantly, they call for the “democratisation of seeds, commons and water.”<sup>45</sup>

This movement begins to challenge aspects of the dominant land model. Specifically, it challenges the current policy model where land is seen as a productive input and a capital asset and agricultural and land policies are placed within a neoliberal market framework. It recognises that one of the primary objectives of the current policy is to maintain and increase the productive utility of the land. Government has promoted the use of invasive technology to deliver high yields to ensure high returns. An implication of the constant use of land through modern agricultural methods is that it does not allow the land to rest, thus damaging the ecosystem. This approach to the land relies on an inordinate amount of fertiliser, which is known to contribute to high carbon emissions.

The Inyanda declaration “assert[s] the right to defend our methods of production, distribution and consumption of food at both national and international levels.”<sup>46</sup> It argues for “the right to practice agro-ecology as our option for today and the future, and demand our government’s support in policy and practice.”<sup>47</sup> In 1999 the GMO law came into effect in the country. Today, yellow and white maize, soya and cotton grown in South Africa are mostly GMO.<sup>48</sup> The current ecological crisis

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<sup>43</sup> Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), “Inyanda Declaration December 2014” in *iNyanda National Land Movement Launch Report* (Cape Town: Trust for Community Outreach and Education, 2015), 53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>48</sup> In 1999 the government passed the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) Act of 1997, and the first crops were planted in 1998. Since 2011, products containing >5% of GMO had to be labelled. For a comprehensive

suggests a review of large-scale monocropping agriculture. The current fragility of the ecosystem necessitates that land policy take account of the crisis.

Merchant and Princen offer useful insights towards a new imagination. Drawing on Merchant's work, imagining a different countryside requires an historical overview of how the making of modern South Africa was premised on the Scientific Revolution and its legitimation of nature and land as private property. By drawing on Federici, the analysis can be advanced through locating the process of accumulation and alienation as deeply dependent on social reproduction and exploitation of women in particular.<sup>49</sup> Such an analysis is necessary if it seeks to go beyond the impasse and reimagining of a new society.

Zo Randriamaro argues that this "hidden crisis: women, social reproduction and the political economy of care" needs to be made visible.<sup>50</sup> It requires a deeper analysis that takes into account the new aspects of social reproduction as primitive accumulation. Specifically, she argues that

social reproduction (renewal) of primitive capitalist accumulation has taken the contemporary forms of land grabbing and intensification of mineral extraction, and use of migrant labour by some transnational corporations to address the difficulties – resulting from the crisis of the social reproduction of the labor force – in the availability of local labour force in the extractive sectors of mineral-rich countries like South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

According to Randriamaro, it is necessary that alternatives place unpaid work and social reproduction at the centre.

Merchant and Princen argue for entirely new ways of conceiving the relationship between man and nature. Merchant's ethic of partnership between humans and nature and Princen's contribution on the need for the logic of sufficiency over the logic of efficiency imply a new relationship with land. By examining the dominant Recovery Narrative embedded in society would be a prerequisite, as would be developing a historical perspective. Alternatives, according to Merchant, can "only

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account of GMO in South Africa, see Africa Centre for Biosafety, "GM contamination, cartels and collusion in South Africa's bread industry."

<sup>49</sup> Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> Zo Randriamaro, "The Hidden Crisis: Women, Social Reproduction and the Political Economy of Care in Africa," 2013, <http://www.pambazuka.org/gender-minorities/hidden-crisis-women-social-reproduction-and-political-economy-care-africa>. Accessed June 12, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Randriamaro, "Hidden Crisis" 1.



come through human action.”<sup>52</sup>

The current ecological crisis and the lack of any meaningful land solution begin to expose some of the inadequacies of existing approaches. Since the new dispensation came into being in 1994, we came to see that when land is conceptualised and experienced as commodity and private property, the crisis is exacerbated. A re-imagining and re-making of how we think of and relate to land, outside of the market, offers a new approach towards another countryside and society.

In the context of extremely high unemployment and high carbon emissions, the ecological crisis presents opportunities to consider non-alienating and non-destructive methods of work and farming that do not subscribe to the logic of efficiency. Even if Inyanda’s new imagination doesn’t entirely recognise these as reasons to adopt alternative farming methods, by opening the door to different methods, a process is allowed to unfold. Adopting methods that enliven and are non-invasive, such as permaculture, agroecology and organic farming, could contribute to the making of a new politics around land, as could a review of modern technology and its impact. Emboldened by frameworks that go beyond ideas of land productivity and utility and towards food sufficiency above food security, we can imagine new possibilities.

Inyanda’s call for those who till, use and heal the soil to make themselves integral to any discussion about land is an attempt to renegotiate the current balance of power on the land. Their call is an attempt to move beyond only a critique of the current agricultural and land models, premised on a system that exploits those who work the soil and sees the land only as a place of extraction, to place those who work the land at the centre of these discussions. This, is an important step towards rethinking our relationship to the land.

According to Ray Bush, Janet Bujra and Gary Littlejohn, “[l]and is often a commodity and it functions as territory.”<sup>53</sup> They note, though, that “[l]and is a means of production that is highly contested.”<sup>54</sup> A significant addition they make to the land discussion is that “[i]n Africa the rhetoric of its abundance needs to be located in relation to people who are available, and healthy and able to work it.”<sup>55</sup> A discussion about land as nature therefore seeks to examine how we work together with the land,

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<sup>52</sup> Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, 242.

<sup>53</sup> Ray Bush, Janet Bujra and Gary Littlejohn, “The Accumulation of Dispossession,” *Review of African Political Economy* 38 (2011): 190, doi:10.1080/03056244.2011.582752.

<sup>54</sup> Bush, Bujra and Littlejohn, “Accumulation of Dispossession,” 190.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

as well as how we relate to one another, especially those tilling and nurturing the land. This is rarely part of the politics of land debate.

How do we begin to conceive of a relationship with land that neither alienates those who till the soil nor the land itself? Such a conception begins to challenge what Bush, Bujra and Littlejohn observe about how land is used. According to them “land is both a mechanism to enrich and promote an agenda for capital accumulation.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, they remind us that work, for those left landless as a result of accumulation through displacement and dispossession, is not guaranteed.<sup>57</sup> They note that “[a]ccumulation by dispossession seems to be a continuous feature of Africa’s uneven and combined incorporation into the world economy.”<sup>58</sup> If this is the case, then a rethink about land within the current framework as well as land politics in general is necessary, with land placed within a broader holistic approach. Such an approach needs to take into account the social reproductive and undervalued productive work, as well as the social, cultural and ecological costs that are (dis)placed upon those in the rural areas, and the land itself.

There can be no question that there is more than sufficient food produced in the world. The quantity is ample. The current system is based on the logic of waste and over-production. Rarely is there a discussion within the politics of land about the logic of sufficiency. Parallel to reconceptualising how we conceive of and value work, methods of agriculture and production, is a reconsideration of what counts as “enough,” so that every person is fed an adequate amount of healthy food. Such an approach could have the potential to ensure that those who till the soil are able to feed themselves and their community.

An enquiry of this nature would ask if current commercial production intends to meet the food demands of an entire society without land and ecosystem destruction, or if the objective is to produce in abundance, regardless of the burden placed on the ecosystem and despite ecological injustice, to ensure infinite consumer choice for a relative few. Part of a new approach to land requires a new set of formulations, not governed by the logic of efficiency and the market, but instead composed of articulations that ensure sufficient produce to provide everyone with safe, inexpensive and nutritional food whilst conscious of the contribution of the land and tillers.

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<sup>56</sup> Bush, Bujra and Littlejohn, “Accumulation of Dispossession,” 191.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Reconsidering the dominant agrarian model in South Africa entails rethinking the relationship to land; making visible the master narratives of land; understanding these within their historical context; and deepening the nature of the land question in general, but in South Africa specifically.

### **3.7 Walker's critique of the master narrative of loss and restoration**

Much of the policy focus and scholarly discussion focuses on black people being denied the ability to access and purchase land.

Cherryl Walker directly addresses the narrative of dispossession in Sol Plaatje's analysis, which runs deep in most work on land in South Africa. She argues that there is a master narrative of loss and restoration that is at the heart of land reform policy. For her, "the master narrative that underpins the project of restitution in South Africa has two central themes – the trauma of deep, dislocating loss of land in the past and the promise of restorative justice through the return of that land in the future."<sup>59</sup>

Walker outlines the headings of the master narrative as:

- (1) colonial wars of dispossession – before this "African people live in peace and harmony with their neighbours, with nature, with the ancestors;"
- (2) apartheid with its relocations and forced removals;
- (3) post-apartheid with little compensation if any;
- (4) "this was all done in order to maintain white supremacy or to advance capital accumulation in the hands of the white ruling class."<sup>60</sup>

For Walker, the "simple story of forced removals has proven to be increasingly problematic."<sup>61</sup> Careful, however, not to suggest that dispossession is untrue, she says that the "political fable" leads to a "hiatus" because the "simple story of forced removals leads to a narrative of restitution that is constructed around the equally ingenuous idea of reversal."<sup>62</sup> Bureaucracy, internal tensions and infighting, according to Walker, have contributed to slow and limited land restitution.<sup>63</sup> Walker avoids WBWS as a key explanation or reason for the lack of land reform delivery. Instead she insists that it is the master narrative seeking to reverse wrongs that is "dangerous" and hinders restitution, as "the elements it assembles are incomplete"

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<sup>59</sup> Cherryl Walker, *Landmarked: Land Claims and Land Restitution in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2008), 34.

<sup>60</sup> Walker, *Landmarked*, 36.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

and “an inadequate guide to the promised land.”<sup>64</sup> According to Walker, this master narrative “enshrines a collective memory of dispossession that stretched back uninterrupted for 350 years ... the actual political and social geography of the vast region lying to the south of the Limpopo River in the mid-seventeenth century is irrelevant.”<sup>65</sup>

In questioning the usefulness of the master narrative of loss, dispossession and forced removals, Walker challenges a conception of land restitution tied to righting racial discrimination of the past. Walker argues that this focus on seeking to undo racial discrimination of the past is key to understanding both the impetus behind land politics, and what underpins the serious limitations of land restitution. Specifically, she argues that the national land fable of the master narrative fails to “deal with specifics.”<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it fails to “relate the national project of land restitution to other programmes” such as housing and environmental conservation.<sup>67</sup> This failure, according to Walker, avoids dealing with the “relationship between social redress and economic development.”<sup>68</sup> In this regard, she argues that at the heart of the land reform delivery failure are “ambiguities of the process itself.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Walker calls into question the limitations of the master narrative on dispossession, she argues that land reform ought to maintain the rule of law and democratic processes thus upholding the constitution. This implies that although Walker potentially identifies the call for deracialisation of property as ill-fated, she does not address the issue of land as private property. Her work therefore does not offer a critique of land as private property or of the WSWB government policy.

Unlike Walker, Fred Hendricks argues that “the land question is racialised.”<sup>70</sup> He draws on the work of Alden and Anseeuw who “delineate three discourses in the white settler narrative in post-colonial Africa, namely loss, fear and privilege.”<sup>71</sup> They further say that “[i]n contrast, the liberation narrative revolves around the discourses

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 16–17.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Fred Hendricks, “Rhetoric and Reality in Restitution and Redistribution: ongoing land and agrarian questions in South Africa,” in F. Hendricks, L. Ntsebeza and K. Helliker, *The Promise of Land* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013), 50.

<sup>71</sup> Hendricks, “Rhetoric and Reality,” 50.

of solidarity, national identity and symbolic restitution.”<sup>72</sup> This is critical to understanding how these narratives inhibit or foster a new imagination. What is equally important according to Hendricks is that “land is a finite resource. Therefore, in so far as the constitution protects property rights in land, it effectually negates claims to land by others.”<sup>73</sup>

Murray et al. argue, that it is difficult to see beyond the master narrative of loss and restoration as well as the inherited and present realities of a

complex of images of our landscape ... South Africa as outpost ... ‘promised land’ ... anthropological ‘homeland’, ... hostels, ‘informal settlements’, ‘squatter camps’, hovels of wood or corrugated iron, and dormitory townships ... mine dumps. Gold. Diamonds. Coal. Chrome. ... the land of plenty: huge multi-storied mansions, swimming pools, double garages, bathroom ‘en suite’, parks, ... shopping malls [...].<sup>74</sup>

It is difficult because these landscapes are not mere images. They are lived experiences, on the one hand, by a small minority and on the other, by a majority of people in South Africa. They are not imagined. The land of high fences demarcating copious hectares—with huge tractors, electric irrigation, wet soil, toxic fertiliser and large numbers of alienated workers—is real. So too, is the land of high walls with swimming pools and tennis courts and huge houses behind them. This landscape is unequal.

Stephen Greenberg observes that “the population identify themselves politically in ways other than as landless.”<sup>75</sup> This is the case even though the majority of people do not own land and find themselves in insecure and precarious land relations, in both urban and rural areas. The land “belongs to someone else.”<sup>76</sup> This understanding, according to Greenberg, is because “the unifying ideology of black nationalism in the struggle against racial oppression overshadowed the more deeply entrenched processes of capitalist development that underpinned land dispossession as they unfolded concretely.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, “[l]and dispossession was viewed through the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>74</sup> Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall, *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City* (London: Routledge, 2007), 279.

<sup>75</sup> Greenberg, “Landless People’s Movement,” 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 15.

lenses of racial policies and lack of political democracy.”<sup>78</sup> Prior to and after 1994, a common identity was forged to claim and struggle for land based upon racial dispossession. This racial dispossession was entrenched through processes of commodification and commercialisation of land, which maintain the separation of people and nature through the constitutional right to private property.

### **3.8 Freedom Charter to negotiated settlement**

Geographical segregation and racial land policy is directly associated with the lack of political democracy during apartheid. Landlessness for black people in South Africa was a manifestation of apartheid. Thus, centring land redress in the Freedom Charter in 1955 was a pinnacle for land reform.

According to Henry Bernstein “land reforms were pursued for different purposes, by different social and political forces, through more or less radical means, and with various outcomes” in different countries.<sup>79</sup> He identifies three significant land reform processes. First, “‘modernising’ (nationalist) land reforms, which accelerated the pace of capitalist development in agriculture.”<sup>80</sup> Second, “the initial dispossession and division of large landholding in favour of ‘land to the tiller’ that was quickly followed by collectivism under communist regimes,” and third, where large commercial estates were expropriated by socialist and nationalist liberation struggles and converted into state farms.<sup>81 82</sup>

I use Bernstein to help locate the Freedom Charter within this discourse. The three types of land processes identified by Bernstein have different emphases. The first prioritises changing white settler ownership to black ownership, but maintains the social propertied relations on the land – that of owner and farm worker. The second type facilitates a different relationship to ownership where those who work the land get a say about the use of the land and control thereof, in a collective approach. The third changes land from private property to state property. This, however, does not imply that the forms of production change. Common to all three of these

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<sup>78</sup> Greenberg, “Landless People’s Movement,” 15.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Bernstein, “Agrarian Question of Capital and Labour: Some Theory about Land Reform (and a Periodization),” in *The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenges of Transformation and Redistribution*, ed. L. Ntsebeza and R. Hall (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 27–59.

<sup>80</sup> Bernstein, “Agrarian Questions of Capital,” 33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 33–34.

processes is that land ownership by colonial power altered whilst production for profit continued.

The process of decolonisation and the unfolding African struggles around land reform influenced and shaped land politics in South Africa. According to Ntsebeza “although most of the mass-based activities of the ANC in the 1950s were in urban areas, when protests against Tribal Authorities in the rural areas accelerated, the ANC could no longer ignore these areas.”<sup>83</sup> The Freedom Charter put forward:

The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.<sup>84</sup>

This is a powerful vision. The Charter suggests a radical approach to land reform with its emphasis on social relations. It sought to change the ownership of land from settler to collective occupation. Importantly, the Charter placed land and produce within a larger transformative agenda. It seems to indicate some care for the soil, but what specifically, is unclear. The call for seeds and implements was, however, not tied to a larger critique of industrial agriculture and modernisation.

Today, elements of this Charter can be found in South African land policy, but important aspects have been abandoned. Aspects such as the land being “shared among those who work it” and a commitment to “banishing famine and land hunger” are absent from the land policy. Deracialising the land remains foregrounded within the land policy. In particular, the policy orientation towards facilitating black ownership of land is prominent, although limited resources are allocated to the process. The land policy takes little, if any, account of rural, urban, social and gender differentials within the category of black people, and is firmly based on righting the

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<sup>83</sup> Lungisile Ntsebeza, “Resistance in the Countryside: The Mpondo Revolts Contextualised,” in *Rural Resistance in South Africa: Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, ed. T. Kepe and L. Ntsebeza (Claremont: Brill, 2011), 38.

<sup>84</sup> African National Charter (ANC), Freedom Charter, 1955.

wrongs of colonialism and apartheid even as it fails to locate them within an imperialist or capitalist economic system.

Conceptions of land, land struggles and land politics over the stretch of these fifty years, from the powerful vision of the Freedom Charter to the uprisings in the rural areas – in particular the Mpondo revolts of the early 1960s – to the negotiated settlement, remain unchanged for the liberation movement at a broad level. While the articulation to deracialise land ownership has remained unchanged, the reality of how people relate to land has altered. These changes can be attributed to interrelated processes such as the rapid progress of industrialisation in South Africa, especially during the period of isolation. The policy of the Bantustans and smaller allotments created land hunger and soil erosion and a decrease in land fertility. This contributed to the “disintegration of their pre-capitalist mode of production in the reserves,” hence the changing conception and experience of land and livelihood, especially for migrant men. Finally, the competing needs for cheap labour between large-scale farmers, extractives and manufacturing during the apartheid period demanded that black people be separated from land.<sup>85</sup>

### **3.9 Land, neoliberalism and the global context**

If the Freedom Charter’s land calls were shaped and influenced by the period of decolonisation and liberation struggles taking place in Africa, then the period leading up to and after the negotiated settlement, the late 1980s and early 1990s, was framed by neoliberalism and the global context.

From the late 1970s, World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) influence found traction in land and agricultural debates globally, and in Africa as well. The WB’s “Agriculture: Sector Working Paper” of 1972 and 1975 took up the issue of land reform and addressed questions relating to land equity and land access, with the specific focus on increasing productivity and output.<sup>86</sup> According to the WB, “changing the pattern of landownership and redistributing land can contribute to

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<sup>85</sup> Fred Hendricks, “Loose Planning and Rapid Resettlement: The Politics of Conservation and Control in Transkei, South Africa, 1950–1970,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Special Issue on the Politics of Conservation in Southern Africa, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1989): 308–309, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2636805>.

<sup>86</sup> See World Bank. “Agriculture Sector Working Paper,” World Bank (1972). Accessed November 6, 2015, <http://r1.ufrrj.br/geac/portal/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/BIRD-Agriculture1972.pdf>.; World Bank, “Land Reform: Sector Policy Paper,” *The World Bank* (1975). Accessed May 25, 2015 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/1975/05/439934/land-reform>.



increases in output in some countries.”<sup>87</sup> The Bank’s particular concern during this period was with economic development, growing rural population size and changing technology.<sup>88</sup>

According to Borras et al., the major recommendations from the WB working papers, are: (1) formal land titling as a precondition for a modern agricultural development; (2) abandonment of the communal tenure systems in favour of free-hold title and subdivision of the commons; (3) promotion of land markets for more efficient land transfers; and (4) support for land redistribution on the grounds of efficiency and equity.<sup>89</sup> In short, the WB sought to promote an agricultural production system premised on private property. According to the WB, a key aspect for modernity and development of land was a market-based system. Redistribution and efficiency could be attained through the “discipline and regulation” of the market.

The WB argued for the abandonment of other forms of land ownership and relations, in particular communal and state land, and a shift towards individual titles and private ownership. It was believed that through this that “equity” and redistribution would occur. Yet, this focus stripped away other facets of land and in so doing attempted to universalise land as private property, as an object. This position assumed that land could be untied from its complex social, political and cultural meaning and heritage. This disentanglement and separation of land from being part of a whole sought to neutralise and sterilise land thus enabling a distance from a conception of land primarily as nature and linked to social relations.

The WB’s approach to land was further articulated through the IMF/WB Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s. Due to the lending schemes and debt repayment conditionalities, green agricultural revolution programmes were imposed upon Third World countries. The market, according to the Bretton Wood Institutions, is the most efficient and productive way to ensure optimal utility of land and poverty reduction. The key elements of SAPS which related to agrarian and land sectors were that “[1] there should be a reduced role of the state in production and marketing in the sector; [2] input supply and crop marketing should be privatized; [3] subsidies and controls over pricing should be abolished; [4] pan-

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<sup>87</sup> World Bank, “Land Reform,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>89</sup> Saturnino M Borras Jr et al., “Anti-Land Reform Land Policy: The World Bank’s Development Assistance to Agrarian Reform in the Philippines,” as part of Overseas Aid and Agrarian Reform Working Papers Series (Belgian Alliance of North-South Movements (11.11.11) and the Focus on the Global South-Philippines, 2009), 5.

territorial producer pricing structures should be replaced by locally market-clearing prices; [5] export crop parastatals should be abolished; and [6] agricultural extension and research services should be reduced and privatized.”<sup>90</sup> These externally imposed conditions undermined and devalued other patterns of land and agricultural relations and it became hard for indebted countries to protect and enable independent small-scale farmers and alternative forms of livelihood that existed parallel to large-scale modern agricultural practices in their countries.

The WB land policy recommendations reflect Hardin’s ideas of the tragedy of the commons which argues that the best management of natural resources is by promoting private property ownership, as outlined in chapter 2. However, with regards to the land sector, Bromley and Cernea “dispel some of the myths, confusions, and exaggerations that have gained currency under the ‘tragedy of the commons’ allegory.”<sup>91</sup> They argue that the tragedy is most accurately the “tragedy of open access” and found that “resource degradation in the developing countries, while incorrectly attributed to ‘common property systems’ intrinsically, actually originates in the dissolution of local-level institutional arrangements whose very purpose was to give rise to resource use patterns that were sustainable.”<sup>92</sup> Bromley and Cernea found that the WB invoking Hardin’s tragedy of the commons was a poor choice in the context of Africa and hence inappropriate recommendations were made. Their findings call into questions the WB land policy recommendations as outlined earlier by Borras et al.

According to Sam Moyo,

land reform discourses are fuelled by the myth that the freehold landholding system and private land markets are the more efficient and superior to customary (so-called communal) land tenure systems. This myth tends to justify the preservation of the dual tenure system, while incorrectly arguing that land reform per se undermines food security and exports, as well as the confidence of investors in the economy.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Godfrey Kanyenze et al., *The Search for Sustainable Human Development in Southern Africa* (Harare: ANSA, 2006), 189–190.

<sup>91</sup> Daniel W Bromley and Michael M Cernea, “The Management of Common Property Natural Resources: Some Conceptual And Operational Fallacies,” as part of World Bank discussion papers, no. WDP 57 (Washington, D.C., 1989): 3.

<sup>92</sup> Bromley and Cernea, “Management of Common Property,” iii.

<sup>93</sup> Sam Moyo, “The Land Question in Southern Africa: A Comparative Review,” in *The Land Question in South Africa*, ed. L. Ntsebeza and R. Hall (Cape Town: HSRC, 2007), 64–65.

It was, however, within the context of the end of the cold war, neoliberal hegemony and WB/IMF SAPs, that the question of land reform came onto the South African negotiation agenda. Although the Freedom Charter carried the hope of a different vision of the countryside, Bernstein warned, that the “land reforms in the name of ‘land to the tiller’ seldom led to comprehensive redistribution in terms of who received the land, except perhaps in the most dramatic instances of social revolution.”<sup>94</sup>

South Africa’s “unfinished revolution” quickly abandoned the “land to the tiller” clause and adopted WB land reform programmes, as agreed in the sunset clauses of the negotiated settlement.<sup>95</sup> How did the new dispensation intend to deracialise land ownership given that the newly democratically elected government adopted and firmly engraved the right to private property in the constitution? How would this continue to perpetuate the separation of land from nature?

### **3.10 Correcting land after 1994**

#### ***3.10.1 ANC policy model***

The 1994 ANC election manifesto states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it ... an ANC government will: guarantee women equal rights to land and special assistance; assist small farmers to get access to training, credit and markets; encourage large-scale farming, and ensure security of tenure and all basic rights for farm workers; guarantee victims of forced removals restitution, which should be carried out fairly through a Land Claims Court; use state land in the implementation of land reform.”<sup>96</sup> These promises were important in the making of a new South Africa. The conception of land that was formed during the colonial and apartheid periods remained unchanged, however. This directly affected the possibilities of the post-apartheid land policy.

The land policy has three main programmes: land restitution, land redistribution and land tenure. The programmes are: (1) “restoring land to those unfairly dispossessed since 1913 as a result of racially discriminatory laws and practices; (2) “based on a system of discretionary grants that assist certain categories of people to

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<sup>94</sup> Bernstein, “Agrarian Questions of Capital,” 33.

<sup>95</sup> See Neville Alexander on “The Unfinished Revolution of South Africa.” Also see Bond, *Elite Transition* and Marais, *Pushed to the Limit* on the South African negotiated settlement.

<sup>96</sup> African National Congress, “1994 ANC National Election Manifesto,” accessed on July 13, 2015, <http://www.anc.org.za/content/1994-national-elections-manifesto>.

acquire land in order to create more equitable access to land;” and (3) “intended to secure and extend the rights of those who have insecure tenure due to past discrimination, weak or unclear legal protection or inadequate systems of land administration.”<sup>97</sup>

The 1997 White Paper protects existing land rights gained pre-1994 and continues to support large-scale commercial farming. The department argued that land reform

aims to contribute to economic development, both by giving households the opportunity to engage in productive land use and by increasing employment opportunities through encouraging greater investment. We envisage ... rural landscape consisting of small, medium and large farms; one which promotes both equity and efficiency through a combined agrarian and industrial strategy in which land reform is a spark to the engine of growth.<sup>98</sup>

Thus the post-apartheid land policy focused on economic development and growth mirroring the WB land policy framework. According to Greenberg, “the democratically-elected government sought economic continuity” from the past and “land reform became closely tied to productive use and agri-business began to shape the agenda more explicitly” even though “land reform was introduced ... to rebalance highly racially-skewed distribution of access that was a consequence of violent dispossession and apartheid.”<sup>99</sup>

Although this neoliberal model has been challenged, the land reform model has remained more or less unaltered over the past twenty years. Added factors that exacerbated land reform during the era after 1994 are the rising debt loads incurred by farmers and the withdrawal of interest-rate subsidies due to liberalisation of the sector.<sup>100</sup> The commercialisation of the sector which were already “anticipated and initiated in the final years of apartheid, have continued since 1994,” has led to changes and fluctuations in the agricultural commodity markets, numerous mergers

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<sup>97</sup> Marc Wegerif, Bev Russell, and Irma Grundling, *Still Searching for Security: The Reality of Farm Dweller Evictions in South Africa* (Polokwane North: Nkuzi Development Association, 2005), 7.

<sup>98</sup> South African Department of Land Affairs, “White Paper on South African Land Policy” (Pretoria: Department of Land Affairs, 1997), 30.

<sup>99</sup> Stephen Greenberg, “The Disjunctures of Land and Agricultural Reform in South Africa: Implications for the Agri-food Systems” *Working Paper* 26 (Bellville: PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, 2013), 1.

<sup>100</sup> See Greenberg, “Status Report on land and agricultural policy in South Africa, 2010,” *Research Report* 40 (Bellville: PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, 2010), 19 – 20; Amy Goldblatt, “Agriculture: Facts and Trends South Africa” (South Africa: WWF, 2010), accessed July 9, 2015, [awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/facts\\_brochure\\_mockup\\_04\\_b.pdf](http://awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/facts_brochure_mockup_04_b.pdf).

and acquisitions in the sector, further land concentration and “volatile and high prices of staple foods.”<sup>101</sup> These factors further entrench the commodification of land and thus reinforcing nature as a source of profit. Wegerif et al. argue that “the last decades have seen the deregulation of the agricultural sector with the removal of marketing boards, subsidies and almost all tariff protection. This has taken place in an increasingly globalised market environment.”<sup>102</sup>

The Government’s land policy, whether through its land restitution, redistribution or tenure processes, has not addressed in any meaningful way the issue of racial injustice. According to Wegerif et al., the key findings from the national eviction survey on farm dwellers were that many of these evictions occurred after 1994, despite the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 (ESTA). Many farm workers were retrenched due to the agricultural policy adopted.<sup>103</sup> Hall argues that this national eviction survey illustrates that “racialised land dispossession has not been consigned to the past, but continues and has even gathered pace in the democratic era.”<sup>104</sup>

Regardless which of the various phases of land policy after 1994 one considers, land tenure and security has been the most retarded aspect of land policy and focus. The notions of the land belonging “to those who live in it” or “to those who work it” cannot be further from the reality in post-apartheid South Africa. Greenberg indicates that

the official land reform programme is a perfect example of the central role provided to the market in issues of redistribution and redress by the developmental state. The programme is a willing seller, willing buyer model meaning that landowners must volunteer to sell their land and potential buyers have to pay the market price for land they want ... There is certainly no attempt or intention to decommodify land.<sup>105</sup>

One reason for the limited land reform is the focus on transferring land rights to deracialise land ownership through the WBWS private property market framework. A

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<sup>101</sup> Henry Bernstein, “Commercial Farming and Agribusiness in South Africa since 1994,” in *Land Divided Land Restored: Land Reform in South Africa for the 21st Century*, ed. B. Cousins and C. Walker (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015), 104, 106 – 118.

<sup>102</sup> Wegerif, et al., *Still Searching for Security*, 7.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>104</sup> Ruth Hall ed., *Another Countryside: Policy Options for Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa* (Cape Town: PLAAS, 2009), 10.

<sup>105</sup> Stephen Greenberg, “Landless People’s Movement,” 5.

second is the limited focus on alternative land production beyond large-scale commercial farming models for food security combined with a lack of vision towards food sovereignty. A third is a fixation on ownership models that affirm private ownership. A fourth is reinforcing land primarily as an economic and political instrument. Alternative approaches can only emerge if land is framed beyond narrow natural resource or economic perspectives. This will offer opportunities to move beyond the current ineffectual land policy.

Discussions about how and to what extent we need to use land is limited in the South African land policy context. This is in part due to the focus on land ownership. Considering why and how we use land is critical for broadening our thinking about it.

### ***3.10.2 NGOs on small-scale farming and alternatives***

Since the mid-1960s, there has been a shift from labour-intensive to capital-intensive agriculture in South Africa.<sup>106</sup> Agricultural modernisation and technological advancement altered the South African landscape. From the 1980s on, there was a steady decline in employment in commercial agriculture but also the proliferation of agri-business. The post-1994 period intensified and hastened the shifts that began in the previous decade. Soon after the new dispensation was established there was massive liberalisation and deregulation of the agricultural sector. According to Greenberg, these changes left uneven impacts but “farm workers have borne the major brunt of agricultural restructuring.”<sup>107</sup> Agricultural restructuring saw large-scale retrenchments; at the same time, large-scale commercial farming was entrenched as the primary model for food security in the post-apartheid period and went unchallenged.

According to Greenberg, the mainstream approach to small-scale farming stems mostly from the idea that large-scale commercial farming is in fact “the basis for food security.”<sup>108</sup> This is the approach of the government. Government policy attempted to introduce small-scale farming either as part of its welfare strategy of food gardens or as part of niche markets in which it tried to “depoliticise and deracialise the question of small-scale agriculture.”<sup>109</sup> Given the “political agenda to increase black ownership” the key issue “was how the ‘justice’ agenda could be contained within a

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Greenberg, “Disjunctures of Land and Agricultural Reform,” 11.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 15–16.

framework of markets and capitalism.”<sup>110</sup> On the other side of the political spectrum, there is a perspective that supports small-scale farming as a means to develop food sovereignty, democratic food regimes and agro-ecology as alternatives.<sup>111</sup>

The current challenges facing emerging and small-scale farmers are due to both land reform and agricultural policies. The agricultural policy model that was adopted emphasises free trade, no agricultural subsidies and the logic of efficiency and competition. Since the 2000s, government extension officers and the department of agriculture have pushed small farmers into niche markets and/or forced them to compete in the same market as large-scale farmers. They have imposed the use of monocropping, GMOs and fertilisers, which have had many negative effects. Government has been advised that keeping labour costs low is efficient, thus they have kept wages down to boost their so-called “competitive advantage.” This has forced small-scale farmers to adopt dominant market labour practices, which are exploitative and have created a tension in the land movement.

Since the mid-2000s, parallel to the government, NGOs have supported small-scale farmers to take alternative routes to dominant agricultural practices. They encourage permaculture, seed banks, intercropping and organic farming methods, so as to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to sustainable farming.<sup>112</sup> NGOs not working in the land sector but with the climate change sector have started to collaborate.<sup>113</sup> Some have engaged in campaigns such as “One Million Climate Jobs,” others around “No to GMOs,” as well as against big agri-business; all see small-scale farming as important alternatives.<sup>114</sup>

Many NGOs provide support with fencing, irrigation, boreholes, seed banks, nurseries and agricultural training, as this type of assistance from the state is minimal.<sup>115</sup> Where state support is granted to small-scale farmers, it is often aligned to mainstream commercial agricultural practices. Many resource conflicts emerge on the

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Examples of these types of perspectives can be seen in organisation such as Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE) and its affiliates (Zingisa, Itereleng, Cala, Khanyisa); Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC); as well as Tshintsha Amakhaya.

<sup>112</sup> NGOs such as Itereleng, Biowatch, Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG), Earth Life Sustainability Institute, Surplus Peoples Project (SPP) etc., are some of the NGOs supporting this work.

<sup>113</sup> Organisations such as Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) and Ecumenical Justice Network (EJN) are two such examples.

<sup>114</sup> AIDC is one of the lead NGOs of the Climate Jobs campaign; African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is one of the lead NGOs in this regard.

<sup>115</sup> Donor organisations provide technical and financial assistance. See, for example: HEKS/EPER, Dikonia, Swedish Groups of Africa.

land, as do conflicting agricultural training methods between NGOs and extension officers. For instance, NGOs will give open pollinated and hybrid seeds, fencing and support for organic farming and practices. The local extension officers dangle annual competitions and rewards such as trackers or additional land, but promote mono-cropping, fertilisers and GMO seeds.<sup>116</sup>

Some NGOs specifically focus on land rights and access.<sup>117</sup> Many focus on HIV/AIDS and organic food garden projects.<sup>118</sup> Others focus on farm dwellers and security of tenure.<sup>119</sup> Many NGOs do not take up the issues of wages or campaigns tied to the notion that “those who till the soil should own the land.” Often they either support farm workers, campaigns for their rights and land tenure, or they support small-scale farmers’ access to markets, land and resources.<sup>120</sup>

Few have overtly expressed connections between the nature of the economy, consumer patterns and between the inherent nature of current land and agricultural policy and larger macro-economic policy, which favours exports and large-scale farming. NGOs are often single-issue focused and try to remain project orientated, attempting to distance themselves from any overt political articulation. They do this to fence their areas of work into sectoral issues, to help beneficiaries through alleviating poverty and promoting development. Those NGOs doing policy work mostly make recommendations and seek to encourage democracy within the rule of law and safeguarding the constitution.

Since 1994, South Africa farm workers have slowly begun to organise themselves independently against neoliberal attacks. Since the formation of the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM), farm workers have joined the broad land movement. Farm workers have generally focused on their rights, land security and evictions. More recently, however, their demands have evolved. Mobilisation and solidarity occurred during the farm workers’ strike in 2012. Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), for instance, demand a decent wage, an eight-hour working day, equal pay, housing and tenure, as well as access to land. They also call for the financial books to be opened to ascertain how truthful

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<sup>116</sup> Countless examples can be cited from Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, areas, which I have extensive working experience in.

<sup>117</sup> Examples are Itereleng Development Trust, LAMOSOA, AFRA.

<sup>118</sup> Examples are the SINANI and CINDI networks in KwaZulu-Natal.

<sup>119</sup> Examples are NKUZI, SPP, and Women on Farms.

<sup>120</sup> Examples are donor agencies such as Oxfam, Action Aid, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FEZ).



commercial farmers are when they claim they cannot afford to pay wages beyond R75–R100 a day. These demands represent a challenge to white large-scale farmers as well as black small-scale farmers who employ farm workers. For the broader land movement these workers' actions represent an important opportunity to meaningfully explore how to move beyond the deracialisation of land ownership.

Many farm workers have been on the white-owned farms for generations. This continues today although much labour restructuring has occurred due to trade deregulation and liberalisation, resulting in the casualisation and flexibility of labour. Over the past ten years, with the increase of labour brokers, workers find themselves in more precarious positions than before. Farmers are taking less responsibility for decent wages, benefits and employment security.<sup>121</sup> A key feature is that seasonal workers are no longer residing on farms but in rural informal settlements, making claims to land harder than they already were.

A significant challenge as regards delivering on deracialising land ownership is that South African land reform policy focuses on land redress whilst ignoring the issue of agricultural reform. There was limited emphasis on linking land reform and agricultural policy post-1994. The post-1994 agricultural model and policy mirrors global trends favouring large-scale commercial farming. This places pressure on labour intensive farming and thus agricultural employment. This in turn holds to ransom the type of land reform possible, as the agricultural policy is aligned to austerity and restrictive macro-economic trade policy.

### ***3.10.3 Inyanda National Land Movement – towards building, creating and imagining a new landscape***

In late 2012 and early 2013, South Africa saw an unprecedented farm workers' strike in the Western Cape. Farm workers had enough of their poor and miserable working conditions. The strike was intense, with violent attacks upon the farm workers by the state and commercial farmers. Many farm workers and leaders who engaged in the strike were evicted and fired.

In June 2013, the People's Assembly on Land, Race and Nation brought together a gathering of community-based organisations, activists, farm worker

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<sup>121</sup> See Greenberg, "The Landless People's Movement and the Failure of Post-apartheid Land Reform," AIDC, *WTO Popular Education Series* Factsheets 1–10 (Cape Town: AIDC, 2002–2003); ILRIG, *Alternative View of Globalisation*, Globalisation booklet series (Cape Town: ILRIG, 1998).

leaders, researchers and other civil society organisations working in the land sector.<sup>122</sup> The People's Assembly marked 100 years of the 1913 Land Act. The Assembly occurred at a critical juncture in South Africa. The Marikana massacre occurred on 16 August 2012.<sup>123</sup> After the mineworkers' strike, targeting the platinum mines, came waves of farm worker strikes where they demanded a minimum daily wage of R150 per day, which started in late August 2012 in the Western Cape.

The Assembly's way forward was to organise, discuss and clarify with individual land organisations "its position on landholding arrangements." It asked, "are we fighting for title deeds (the private ownership of land) or some other kind of arrangement and if so what kind of arrangement?"<sup>124</sup> A year later the Inyanda National Land Movement was launched at the end of 2014.<sup>125</sup> At this national gathering the 2013 People's Assembly Declaration was amended and adopted, which stated that "the struggle for transformation must be based on a new imagination that is based on a total re-configuration of South Africa."<sup>126</sup> They argue that "in the name of economic growth, our environment and rich natural resource heritage is being severely compromised," hence the movement seeks to build and create new kinds of land arrangements.<sup>127</sup>

The declaration frames its demands within the deepening economic and social inequalities of the post-apartheid period. Importantly, it envisions a particular form of land and agrarian reform. Three aspects of the declaration are significant to emphasise for the purposes of this thesis. First, it takes on the historical blind spot of an analysis of racial discrimination in the 1913 Native Land Act, forced removals and segregation during apartheid. Second, it critiques the post-1994 dispensation and its inadequacies in addressing past racial injustices and dispossession. It demands that government must scrap "the willing buyer, willing seller" approach to land acquisition. Third, the

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<sup>122</sup> The Assembly was part of a four-day process. The first two days consisted of a conference on "Land, Race and Nation: A century of dispossession." On May 3rd a colloquium on the "Farm workers strike in the Western Cape" took place as part of the build up to the Assembly. The events were hosted by the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town, and Rhodes University.

<sup>123</sup> Thirty-four mineworkers were massacred, 250 arrested and 78 wounded by the South African police force in Marikana after a strike commenced for higher wages at the Lonmin Platinum Mine. The documentary *Miners Shot Down* is a vivid account of the Marikana massacre.

<sup>124</sup> TCOE, "Inyanda Declaration," in the *National Land Movement Launch Report* 2015, 51.

<sup>125</sup> This was an impressive conference, taking place in the Eastern Cape, with representatives of people's land organisations from across South Africa. There were many commissions. The discussions were not abstract but steeped in people's experience of working on the land as small-scale farmers, farm workers, those evicted and others seeking restitution. The discussions were rich and extensive with translations ensuring good participation.

<sup>126</sup> TCOE, "Inyanda Declaration," 53.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

declaration argues that the current policies favour large-scale commercial farmers, agri-farming and agri-business, transnational corporations peddling GMOs, fertilisers and pesticides and specifically the monocropping export-led market economy.<sup>128</sup> This draws attention to the class agenda of the current land reform policy. In response, the declaration argues for the subdivision of land. It states that “there must be subdivisions of farms so that small farmers can get access to small parcels of land. Land reform cannot be about big farms and black commercial farmers: this is a land reform that excludes us.”<sup>129</sup>

There are two sets of primary demands that emerged after CSAAWU 2012 strikes: one is encapsulated in the Inyanda Declaration of December 2014, and the other is the 23 Farm Worker Demands by CSAAWU in 2014.<sup>130</sup> One of the strongest demands is farm worker access to land. The statement highlighted that

farm workers want land for themselves, as well as jobs. Our families need to do lots of things to survive. We need land to grow food and to earn extra income. Farm workers and dwellers want to benefit from land reform, food production and labour rights. We want government to promote the building of farm worker co-operatives on farms.<sup>131</sup>

This is a significant demand. Absent, however, is “the land shall *belong* to all those who work it.” This demand, as discussed earlier, was placed on the country’s political agenda. It is an important demand, now more than ever, given deepening inequality, exploitation and mass unemployment in South Africa. This demand suggests a change to propertied social relations on farms and a halt to the exploitation of those who till the soil. Through new forms of collective farming it is possible that an end to exploitative labour practices can be planned with new agricultural systems.

There is, however, a tension in the Inyanda Declaration. It calls for (i) “full rights” to own land; (ii) “control over” land and (iii) living in “harmony” with land. Making these tensions apparent is important. With regard to the first point, the tension exists because dispossession and racial injustice hinges on giving “full rights”, access, privilege and ownership to whites and not others. It is within this context that the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 54, 58.

<sup>129</sup> People’s Assembly: Land, Race and Nation Conference, 22 June 2013, section 3.5.

<sup>130</sup> Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), “CSAAWU Worker Control, Democracy & Socialism: Farmworkers 23 Demands,” *CSAAWU pamphlet* ((Bellville: 2014).

<sup>131</sup> CSAWU, “CSAAWU Worker Control, Democracy & Socialism,” and People’s Assembly: Land, Race and Nation Conference, 22 June 2013, section 18.

declaration argues that “we want to have secure and long-term rights to land. We do not want short-term leases. If commercial farmers have ownership or long-term rights, small-scale farmers also need ownership or long-term rights. Do not give us inferior rights.”<sup>132</sup> Second, the call addresses the historical denial of women’s access (specifically black women) to land tenure due to the patriarchal nature of both the traditional authorities and the state. The remedy suggested is that women have an equal right to land ownership. Hence, if white men can own land then black women should own land too. Lastly, farm workers call for “full rights” because many have lived and worked on farms for many generations, yet remain land insecure and have experienced evictions, unlike the security the commercial farm owner has.

It is important to make visible that calling for “full rights” over land is bound to an historically unexamined aspect of the agrarian question in South Africa. The aspiration of BEE farmers is to emulate large-scale farming, which is highly modernised and industrialised. The contestation for a market share and market access in a highly undemocratic food system obscures the unequal distribution of food and hunger in South Africa. The “successful” farmer is the one who makes huge profits. What is hidden is that a huge profit in farming – whether you are a white or black farmer – is only made as a result of massive exploitation of labour and land.

The Inyanda vision states that “comprehensive land and agrarian reform is based on ensuring full rights over land for indigenous peoples, rights to their territories, fishing communities’ rights to marine resources and pastoralists’ rights to grazing and migratory routes. ... We should get all the resources that can make the land productive.”<sup>133</sup> This vision illustrates the potential tensions in a national movement made up of livelihood farmers, small-scale farmers, aspirant large-scale farmers, farm workers and landless people, all of whom have very different needs with regards to the land. Before 1994, 97% of the land was owned by 13% of the population, and in the Western Cape, for example, land use, access and distribution have remained virtually unchanged. Those needs that stray from the dominant narrative are far from being met.

From the declaration it is clear that the Inyanda National Land Movement opposes agri-business and agri-farming. It calls for the democratisation of seed and

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<sup>132</sup> People’s Assembly: Land, Race and Nation Conference, 22 June 2013, section 3.6.

<sup>133</sup> People’s Assembly: Land, Race and Nation Conference, June 22, 2013, section 1.

agro-ecological farming. Notwithstanding “full rights” *to* as well as *over* land, this makes for a tension in the declaration, as rights over land generally reflects a perspective in which society assumes its right to dominate and extract from land for their need, regardless of consequence. It is significant that the Inyanda National Land Movement decided to consult their constituencies to engage in discussion to review the demand to own land. Similarly, it is significant that the movement demands food sovereignty and not food security. It suggests that the movement is engaging in alternative agricultural models and could potentially be considering the implication of the dominant food systems on land as well as on themselves.

Making visible the relationship between racial dispossession and accumulation – two sides of the same coin – is critical to beginning to see land as part of nature and not a commodity. In the context of South Africa, it is easy to conflate the right of access to land with the right to ownership. Today, the materially resourced people own land and the vast majority of working people do not. It is mainly non-white people who remain landless in post-apartheid South Africa whilst the historically privileged continue to own land. The class relationship to land is hidden in the dominant discussion of racialised land. The need to relinquish the right to and demand for land ownership, and therefore the right to private property, could become more obvious once it is clearer that the concept of land as nature, is a key element of reimagining society.

#### ***3.10.4 Land beyond loss, restoration, fear, privilege and inheritance?***

The Inyanda call for the end to GMOs and destructive agricultural practices, for example the use of poisonous pesticide, is significant. Similar to organisations such as Biowatch, Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE) and the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Inyanda regards an end to GMOs and chemical pesticides as central to the health and well-being of those who till the soil, the society that consumes the produce, and the soil and land itself - thus the environment at large. These organisations argue that a decline in highly mechanised agricultural production will ensure a decrease in methane and carbon monoxide, therefore lowering the carbon footprint of these practices and potentially abating ecological strain.

TCOE, one of the organisations supporting the Inyanda National Land Movement, opposes industrial agriculture because “it failed to fulfil promises to feed

the world and end hunger.”<sup>134</sup> They argue that “industrial agriculture is associated with many of the ‘global crises’ and other problems that impact mostly the poor.” They list some of the associated crises such as the food crisis, the ecological crisis, traditional seed destruction, climate change, land and water dispossession and the undermining of food sovereignty.<sup>135</sup>

Princen’s logic of sufficiency implies limits on consumption and excessiveness and adopts a needs-based approach. With regard to agriculture, Princen’s ideas would imply production in accordance with: what is enough, only what is seasonal and what can supply local domestic markets. Producing sufficient and healthy food is people-intensive. To this end, an adoption of permaculture, agro-ecology and alternative farming methods support the logic of sufficiency even if this is not explicitly referred to in the Inyanda National Land Movement’s declaration. These methods are clearly linked in the declaration to land and soil rehabilitation and sustainable use.

Masanobu Fukuoka in *The One-Straw Revolution* suggests an even more radical step. He argues for “returning to the source” and “towards a Do-Nothing Farming” approach.<sup>136</sup> Specifically he proposes a “natural way to [farm],” which according to him is “farming as simply as possible within and in cooperation with the natural environment, rather than the modern approach of applying complex techniques to re-make nature entirely for the benefit of human beings.”<sup>137</sup> Importantly, it is also about making work (farming) “easier instead of harder.”<sup>138</sup> However, Fukuoka believes that “even ‘returning-to-nature’ and anti-pollution activities, no matter how commendable, are not moving towards a genuine solution if they are carried out solely in reaction to the overdevelopment of the present age.”<sup>139</sup>

Implicit in the aforementioned Inyanda call for changing the size of farms, as well as methods of farming, is a change in the social relations on the land. In this regard, the call for food sovereignty is fundamentally linked to changing both social relations as well as relations between society and nature. The Inyanda Declaration calls for a “new imagination” of the countryside – an embryonic and potentially different understanding of how we conceive of land. It suggests recognising old

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<sup>134</sup> Trust for Community Outreach (TCOE), “Why is agro-ecology an alternative,” *TCOE pamphlet* (Cape Town, 2013).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution* (New York: New York Review Book, 2009), 15, 19.

<sup>137</sup> Fukuoka, *One-Straw Revolution*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

conceptions in order to form new conceptions of and relations to land. These new conceptions are embedded in a practice of food sufficiency and not efficiency. The call suggests a break with the existing productive and propertied social relations. The declaration proposes that those who work the land should be recognised, made visible and valued as integral to societal well-being.

Central to this markedly different approach is an end to both private property and the false idea of Hardin's tragedy of the commons. It implies new obligations and relations with regard to how land is used and a change in people's access to land. It encourages a recognition and understanding that humans affect and are affected by land, which could overcome the preoccupation with subduing land to meet consumerist wants. Such an approach recognises the delicate and necessary balance and connection between society and land. Those who know the land intimately can maintain this balance best.

### **3.11 The promise of land**

In 2012, approximately 67% of land was owned by commercial agriculture.<sup>140</sup> Land remains concentrated in the hands of a relative few. Those who till the soil for a meagre wage or no wage at all remain unrecognised and excluded in making decisions about the land. People previously excluded during apartheid are still no closer to accessing land than before democracy. Commercial agriculture concentrates land in many of the same private hands that were privileged during apartheid. This perpetuates and re-enforces enclosures cemented during the colonial and apartheid periods.

The WBWS land policy and the defence of the rule of law with regard to property rights specifically maintains and ensures the process of separating “producers [from] direct access to the means of their own reproduction.”<sup>141</sup> According to Wood, prior to capitalism “for millennia, human beings have provided for their material needs by working the land” and “the emergence of the market as a determinant of social reproduction presupposed its penetration into the production of life's most basic necessity, food.”<sup>142</sup> She states that “enclosures meant, more particularly, the extinction (with or without a physical fencing of land) of common

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<sup>140</sup> Cheryl Walker and Alex Dubb, “The Distribution of Land in South Africa: An Overview,” *Fact Check No. 1: Land Reform* (Bellville: PLAAS/UWC, 2013).

<sup>141</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Agrarian Origins of Capitalism,” *Monthly Review* 50, no. 3 (1998): 1.

<sup>142</sup> Wood, “Agrarian Origins,” 1.

and customary use-rights on which many people depended for their livelihood.”<sup>143</sup> She highlights that a “capitalist conception of property – property as not only as ‘private’ but also exclusive, literally excluding other individuals and communities,” replaced older conceptions of property as “communal ownership of common lands.”<sup>144</sup>

Critical for Wood is that we do not lose sight of the effects of the economic market and its imperative shaping of land use. She argues that “once market imperatives set the terms of social reproduction, all economic actors – both appropriators and producers, even if they retain possession, or indeed outright ownership, of the means of production – are subject to the demands of the competition, increased productivity, capital accumulation, and the intense exploitation of labour.”<sup>145</sup> The current parameters of land reform – rule of law, the constitution and its private property clause – do more than maintain previous racial inequalities. They place a premium on owning, accumulating and investing in land, equating land to any share listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Fraser agrees with Wood, asserting that “capitalism overturned” previous relationships outside the labour and exchange market when “it enclosed the commons, abrogated the customary use rights of the majority and transformed shared resources into private property of a small minority.”<sup>146</sup> Therefore, she asks, should there not be a break from the concept of land as private property?<sup>147</sup>

Calls for land reform within the constraints of a private property paradigm with assumptions of the logic of efficiency and economic competition seem unlikely to challenge the colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid patterns of private property ownership. The Inyanda Declaration suggests that land reform calls for the need to evaluate and take into account how people live with and use the land. This suggests a challenge to the structural and institutional relationships between people, and between people and the land.

It is useful to draw on Fraser who highlights the “break-up of the previous social world in which most people, however differently situated, had access to the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>146</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism,” *New Left Review* 86 (2014): 57.

<sup>147</sup> I borrow Ellen Meiksins Wood idea of rupture; she explains that for capitalism to occur, a fundamental break needs to happen with everything that came before.



means of subsistence and means of production; access, in other words, to food, shelter and clothing, and to tools, land and work, without having to go through labour markets.”<sup>148</sup> A critical question is how a call for land reform could regain the access Fraser outlines. Can it occur through land markets as suggested with the WSWB policy? Should anyone in post-apartheid South Africa own land?

The current debate conceals the dominant conception of land as highlighted at the start of this dissertation. The assumption is that land has always been private property. Land is portrayed as a natural resource for extraction, ownership and material benefit, and thus an object that society has control over so as to exploit for the benefit of mankind’s development. This, however, is far from historically accurate. Wood argues that capitalism is naturalised so as “to disguise its distinctiveness as a historically specific social form, with a beginning and (no doubt) an end.”<sup>149</sup> She turns on its head the idea that capitalism “was born not in the city but in the countryside, in a very specific place, and very late in human history.”<sup>150</sup> Capitalism in the countryside “required not a simple extension or expansion of barter and exchange but a complete transformation in the most basic human relations and practices, a rupture in age-old patterns of human interaction with nature in the production of life’s most basic necessities.”<sup>151</sup>

For Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker the land question in South Africa “will not be resolved by monetary compensation” or “piecemeal transfer of poor-quality land from whites to black” or “settled by the formalisation of procedures for evictions of farm workers”, nor “will it be resolved by the upgrading of shacks in urban slums.”<sup>152</sup> They argue that “the ongoing racialised inequalities in land, inherited from colonial dispossession, act as a spatial barrier to imagining a unitary nation in contemporary South Africa.”<sup>153</sup> Land reform is beyond technical policy fixes; “an entirely different approach is required if democracy is to survive in South Africa.”<sup>154</sup> This is a break from the current scholarly approaches, which tend to focus on policy and stumbling blocks in current tired and ineffectual land reform processes. This dissertation argues that private property land ownership is an inadequate means to

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<sup>148</sup> Fraser, “Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode,” 57.

<sup>149</sup> Wood, “Agrarian Origins,” 1.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>152</sup> Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker, *Promise of Land*, 341.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 341.

address racial land dispossession of the past. Moreover, it cannot address the issue of redistribution, recognition or representation.<sup>155</sup>

Hendricks et al. argue that it is through grassroots organisations that land can be reimagined. For them “the role of social movements is absolutely critical, these struggles from below hold the promise of affording ordinary people the chance to participate in the making of their own futures.”<sup>156</sup> Of equal importance for the promise of land is a need to understand apartheid and capitalism as two sides to the same coin – racial oppression was critical for capitalist exploitation and accumulation of land, capital and labour. Hendricks et al. bring to our attention the inadequacies of the “South African historiographies” which “deal in the binaries of peasant and proletariat” leaving out “the masses of people who exist on the margins of society” who “fall squarely under the overwhelming dominance of the capitalist system.”<sup>157</sup>

A critical contribution of *The Promise of Land* is that it engages directly with the key issues around the politics of land. This affords one an opportunity to consider what radical land transformation or revolution could mean for social relations in South Africa. For the purpose of this dissertation, this endeavour enables us to link changed social relations to new relations with land and nature.

The promise and struggle for land represents the potential of a transformed society. At one level, this seeks a redress of racial injustice caused by past dispossession. At a different level, the important contribution of *The Promise of Land* is that it locates the significance and importance of land reform beyond deracialisation of land ownership. Hendricks et al. argue that in the context of urbanisation, proletarianisation, mass unemployment and poverty, the need for land and agrarian reform in South Africa is vital “in the struggle for livelihoods, sovereignty and full citizenship.”<sup>158</sup>

The contemporary struggle for land brings into sharp focus the continued unequal spatial geography as well as the deepening economic and social inequality that resulted from apartheid capitalist policies as well the neoliberal policies of today. The promise of, and struggle for land is an alternative to the existing status quo. The

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<sup>155</sup> I have borrowed Nancy Fraser’s use of redistribution so as to reflect that land remains concentrated; recognition (she speaks of unpaid care work) in that those who work the land are not seen; representation (she speaks to identity politics) in that black people still largely left out of the frame. For a full account, see Nancy Fraser, “Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History,” *New Left Review* 56 (2009).

<sup>156</sup> Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker, *Promise of Land*, 342.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

land question is central as “people have en masse been dispossessed and disconnected from the land, a huge portion have not been absorbed into gainful employment in urban (or rural) areas. They are trapped in activity and unemployment largely because territorial segregation was part of the process of primitive accumulation.”<sup>159</sup>

Over the past few years and in particular since 2012, farm workers have waged an offensive against commercial farmers. Underpaid, invisible and marginalised workers are organising for better working conditions. They have demanded an end to labour brokers who undermine their negotiating capacity and legal rights. They demand a decent wage and equal wages for women and men. They demand from government decent housing, secure tenure and land for their livelihood. Farm workers have blockaded roads, set vineyards alight and have fought back to defend themselves against the brutality, racism, exploitation and violence they experience daily. They resist because they have no other options. What would the promise of land be for the farm workers who till the soil, produce the food and tend to the land?

Wood claims that “the most basic difference between all pre-capitalist societies and capitalism” is that “it has nothing to do with whether production is urban or rural and everything to do with the particular property relations between producers and appropriators, whether in industry or agriculture. Only in capitalism is the dominant mode of surplus appropriation based on the dispossession of the direct producers whose surplus labour is appropriated by purely ‘economic’ means.”<sup>160</sup> The farm workers’ strikes and small-scale farmers’ demands for land place property relations at the centre of the land debate. But they also ask critical questions about how we relate to each other and to land.

Thus, the power of the Inyanda Declaration and their movement is that they are organising everyone working the land. By breaking the silence and silos of struggle organisations they have begun to challenge existing social relations. This movement has huge challenges and contradictions to confront. Outlining the contradictions brings them closer to a different relationship to the land, to themselves and to one another. The farm workers find themselves on black-owned and white-owned farms; the landless find themselves struggling for land in urban and rural areas regardless of which party runs the municipality; small-scale farmers slowly begin to see the

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>160</sup> Wood, “Agrarian Origins,” 2.

contradiction of the demand for access to markets and at the same time trying to retain agro-ecological methods. Together, however, in building a platform in which each experience is explored and affirmed, the demands made are not the lowest common denominator but rather one with an emancipatory project.

The power of the farm workers' strikes and their centrality in the movement forces the question of reproductive and productive work towards the centre. The power of subsistence farmers, who are mainly women, demanding land from the traditional authorities, makes visible the naturalisation of care work, thereby challenging the system of patriarchy and capitalism on the land. Their demands are a direct challenge to the unequal, unpaid and invisible work that feeds the family and the community through tilling the soil.

The call for deracialisation of land ownership is an inadequate call. Tracing the call historically and locating its footprint is a necessary step to begin to construct a new call, which explicitly connects people and land, in which land as part of nature is foregrounded. In so doing, the chapter brings to the fore how the shift from communal land and farms to large-scale commercial agriculture not only displaced people but turned the land into factories run with low paid labour. This process undermined egalitarian and communal ways of working and living with the land. This chapter furthermore showed that the call to deracialise land ownership obscures these dramatic shifts that occurred. Farming that was once respectful of nature's cycles has been transformed. Colonial and apartheid commercial farming fostered the domination over land and alienating farming practices. Mechanisation, subsidies and the agricultural revolution led by the apartheid regime, and driven by the South African mineral-energy complex, has left its mark on people and land. Neoliberal post-apartheid land policy maintains a private property land ownership regime, thus entrenching commercial farming and domination over land and the people who work it.

## **Chapter Four: The Many Traumas of Mining in South Africa – The Limits of Capitalist Exploitation of Nature**

### **4.1 Introduction: The challenge of mineral exploitation today**

The chapter traces the changing conception of minerals in history, locating the mineral revolution in the making of South Africa capitalism. In so doing, the chapter shows how assumptions regarding economic gains come to trump alternative conceptions of nature, people and work. This chapter examines earlier ideas in numerous State policy documents as well as other key documents on the question of mineral wealth serving the people as a whole, creating jobs and improving living conditions.

In the process it becomes apparent that the alleged new mining jobs and improved living conditions based on mineral extraction rest upon one of the most ecologically destructive practices in the world.<sup>1</sup> This is a serious dilemma that is neglected or often hidden in the debate on mining-for-development.

The chapter asks: “Is there an alternative to mining?” Or “is there a way to talk honestly about the effects of mining?” The aim of the chapter is to show that mining is based on the objectification of minerals and metals (nature), and in its process simultaneously objectifies mineworkers and mining-affected communities.

### **4.2 Mining, a necessary evil for industrialisation – who bears the cost?**

Extraction of minerals through surface or deep mining is generally understood as necessary and central for an industrial society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> New mining investment has not seen permanent job creation. The data shows that between 1990 and 2014 the sector had shed 284 000 jobs. See Quantec data, accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.quantec.co.za/>.

<sup>2</sup> See Eduardo Gudynas, “The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses about Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism,” *America’s Programme Report* (Washington: Centre for International Policy, 21 January 2010, 1, 10-11). He argues that extractivism continues to be promoted as the “motor of economic growth,” regardless of the reality and implications by governments as well as progressives.

Yet, over recent decades, it has become evident that mining creates ecological hazards and endangers the lives of mineworkers and mining-affected communities.<sup>3</sup> These ecological hazards and dangers extend to society at large due to the high carbon emissions, acid drainage, as well as water and air pollution that accompany mining processes. Many scholars, mining-affected communities and public sector actors commenting on mineral extraction convey to varying extents that the costs of mining are a necessary evil for economic growth and development.<sup>4</sup> Given the current ecological crisis and the broad global consensus on the need to radically decrease carbon emissions, the predominant conception of mineral extraction as a necessary evil cannot go unexamined. Since 2007, prominent reports by the Bench Marks Foundation, which reveal the horrendous living conditions (socially, economically and environmentally) of mining-affected communities, demand that critical questions are asked.<sup>5</sup> Their reports show the lack of transformation, as well as the devastating social and environmental impact mining has on mining-affected communities and mineworkers.

Over the past five years, one case in particular has been in the media spotlight, forcing South Africa to pay attention to mining. The Marikana massacre, mentioned in Chapter 3, highlights the depth and extent to which the mining companies and state

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<sup>3</sup> See Alberto Acosta, “Extractivism and Neextractivism: Two Sides of the Same Curse,” in *Beyond Development from Latin America*, ed. M. Lang and D. Mokrani (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2013), 69–70; for South Africa see David Hallows and Victor Munnik, *Peak Poison: The Elite Energy Crisis and Environmental Justice* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press/Ground Work Report, 2007), 138–143, 148–161. For an extensive illustration of the waste and destruction of mining in South Africa, also see David Hallows, *Toxic Futures: South Africa in the Crisis of Energy, Environment and Capital* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press/GroundWork, 2011), 108–131. More recent accounts can be found in *Amandla! 47: Amandla!* Correspondent, “Coal is Key to Resolving the Drought – Not Wet Wipes”; Samantha Hargreaves, “Women Defending Water, Land and Life in Northern KwaZulu-Natal”; Bench Marks Community Monitors, “Mining Destruction and the Fight for Change”; Gugu Nkabinde and Meshack Mbangula, “They take the Gold and Leave us Slime Dams and Health Problems”; Meshack Mbangula, “The People Are Writing Their Own Mining Charter”; *Amandla! 46: Amandla!* Correspondent, “Amadiba Crisis Committee: The struggle continues”; *Amandla! 45:* Local Correspondent, “Stop Mining before It Starts: Amadiba struggle continues despite assassination.”

<sup>4</sup> For a global viewpoint that expresses this sentiment, see Ugo Bardi, *Extracted: How the Quest for Mineral Wealth Is Plundering the Planet: A Report to the Club of Rome* (USA: Chelsea Green, 2014). In South Africa, an example to be discussed later in the chapter is the Mining-Environment-Community Alliance (MECA), which consists of 70 organisations. “It is a coalition of civil society, community organisations, academic institutions and law clinics concerned about the impacts of mining on the environment and on the communities that rely on those natural resources. MECA works to implement a Civil Society Legal Strategy to Promote Environmental Compliance, Transparency and Accountability in Mining”. Last accessed September, 20 2016, <http://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/industry-and-conservation/conservation-and-mining/connect-2/mining-environment-and-community-alliance-meca/>.

<sup>5</sup> See the Bench Marks Foundation, “Policy Gap 1: A review of the corporate responsibility programme of the platinum mining industry in the North West Province” (Johannesburg: Bench Marks Foundation, 2007); “Policy Gap 6, Communities in the Platinum Minefields: A Review of Platinum Mining in the Bojanala District of the North West Province: A Participatory Research Action Approach” (Johannesburg: Bench Marks Foundation, August 2012); and “Policy Gap 7, Coping with Unsustainability: Lonmin 2003–2012 Report” (Johannesburg: Bench Marks Foundation, October 2013), all <http://www.bench-marks.org.za/>.

collude to silence resistance through any means necessary, be it murder, violence, victimisation or arrests. During the massacre, the plight of mineworkers and mining-affected communities came to the fore. The super-exploitative conditions told a particular story of accumulation and the inhumanity of extractive industries. The reports and media footage showed how mining-affected communities live in subhuman conditions, and how the mines dump waste, create air and water pollution and externalise ecological and social costs onto surrounding communities.

Due to the Marikana massacre and numerous other mining cases and reports in South Africa, there are now demands being made with regards to mining and the environment.<sup>6</sup> I outline three broad demands here:

- 1) Mineworkers demand a decent living wage, job creation and beneficiation, improved working and living conditions, as well as health and safety around the mines.<sup>7</sup>
- 2) Mining-affected communities demand to be consulted and to have a share in the gains of mineral extraction be it employment, development such as housing, infrastructure and an end to human rights violation in these areas.<sup>8</sup> They furthermore demand acknowledgement and compensation for the social and environmental effects of mining in their communities, and call upon companies and the state to mitigate environmental impact.
- 3) Environmental groups demand an end to fossil fuel mining.<sup>9</sup>

These demands reflect that the vast gains and exorbitant profits resulting from extraction and exploitation of minerals benefit a relative few at the expense of many

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<sup>6</sup> Prior to the recent cases there have been campaigns and mobilisations in South Africa around the events of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the Alternative Mining Indaba since 2009, and COP 17, 2011 in Durban on climate change and fossil fuels, all of which have garnered greater awareness of the impact of mining on the climate.

<sup>7</sup> These are demands of the association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). In 2014 I joined a group of Austrian visitors from Dreikonigsaktion (DKA) on a field trip to Witbank coal mining area, AMCU and MACUA. Prior to heading to the field we had a meeting with AMCU president Joseph Mathunjwa in which he highlighted these as AMCU demands.

<sup>8</sup> Mines and Communities (MAC), "South Africa: People's Mining Charter," June 26, 2016. Accessed on July 14, 2016, <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=13434>.

<sup>9</sup> See calls by organisations such as GroundWorks, EarthLife, WoMin. Other campaigns such as Fossil Free South Africa calls for financial disinvestment. Carbon Tax campaigns and OneMillionJobs are lobby groups placing pressure on mines to reduce their carbon footprint.

people's homes, communities, health, livelihoods, land, water and air.<sup>10</sup> The Bench Marks Foundation reports claim that the mining companies aim to maintain production and profits, and take negligible responsibility for the negative impact of mining. When confronted by the mining-affected communities, the mining companies argue that their corporate social responsibility and sustainability programmes are in place.

The National Development Plan (NDP), to be discussed in section 4.5.2 of this chapter, clearly sees mining as a key employer, a means of creating revenue and an industry central to the State's economic transformation model. Labour seeks to maintain and expand employment in an historically employment-creating sector and calls for job protection, greater investment and production.<sup>11</sup> In the case of government and mineworkers' unions, reports in the media in 2015 reflect that "the parties ... formally signed off on 10 joint interventions, ranging from joint initiatives to promote South African minerals, to agreements to enhance productivity and an agreement that, when mines were intended to be mothballed or sold, saving jobs would be prioritised."<sup>12</sup> At the centre of the unions' concerns are workers' jobs.

The demands by civil society groups are centred on social and economic justice. This could be most clearly seen at the Alternative Mining Indaba, which rallied people together under the banner of "mak[ing] natural resources work for the people, leaving no one behind."<sup>13</sup> According to the Mining-Environment-Community Alliance (MECA),

the focus of our concern and endeavours is not to oppose mining, but to ensure that adequate assessment and mitigation of detrimental impacts take place within reasonable timeframes before prospecting and mining are commenced, followed by predictable compliance monitoring of requirements set, and strong enforcement action taken when non-compliance is

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<sup>10</sup> AIDC "Permanent Peoples' Tribunal Juror Report on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa," accessed September 20, 2016, <http://aidc.org.za/permanent-peoples-tribunal-jurors-report/>.

<sup>11</sup> Natasha Marrian "New Deal Aims to Stem Mine Job Cuts," *Mail & Guardian*, August 27, 2015, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/mining/2015/08/27/new-deal-aims-to-stem-mine-job-cuts>.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Gernetzky, "Mining Industry Unions and Government Agree on Plan to Stem Job-losses," *Mail & Guardian*, August 31, 2015, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/mining/2015/08/31/mining-industry-unions-and-government-agree-on-plan-to-stem-job-losses>.

<sup>13</sup> Itai Masuku and Johnlyn Tromp, "Official Report of the Alternative Mining Indaba 2015" (Cape Town: Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA).



found. This is the only way to ensure responsible environmental practices at mines, in the interest of workers, communities and the country.<sup>14</sup>

The position of government, the unions and many of the mining-affected community alliances, as will be outlined later in this chapter, reflect an unexamined understanding of the assumed economic growth, development and transformation that mining promises. The South African government's mineral policy, according to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, "had to take account of the international nature of the mining industry in order to ensure the continuing prosperity of our own mines."<sup>15</sup> In part, the approach and policy adopted in the new dispensation is a product of a global discourse on mining that is linked to the general history of minerals.

### 4.3 Minerals in history

During antiquity, minerals and metals in the depths of the earth were believed to hold special powers and were seen as part of nature. According to Ugo Bardi, metals were part of Gaia's gifts and "in those ancient times, many believed that immense powers resided there – like the power of a volcano embodied by Greek Chimera, a mythical fire-breathing monster."<sup>16</sup> Minerals were thought of as active subjects; they were seen as an extension of plant roots and were regarded as a lower form of living matter similar to root vegetables and the veins of the earth. It was argued that minerals were intentionally hidden from sight and should stay untouched.

The mining of gold and iron in early history was associated with "human corruption and avarice" and "the worst crime against mankind [was] committed by him who was the first to put a ring upon his fingers."<sup>17</sup> Some argued that "extracting iron was the source of human cruelty in the form of war, murder and robbery."<sup>18</sup> This viewpoint reflected the disdain for extraction during an older period. Minerals such as gold, amber and jade were also prized for their rareness and were thought to have magical powers. Thus, during this early period the extraction of minerals was contested and not seen as necessary or natural. There were moral and normative

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<sup>14</sup> See Centre for Environmental Rights, accessed Sept 20, 2016, <http://cer.org.za/programmes/mining>.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "White Paper: A Minerals and Mining Policy for South Africa," October 1998, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Bardi, *Extracted*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 30–31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

constraints to mining and the associated damage to Mother Nature. Over time, however, arguments were slowly shaped to justify mineral extraction.<sup>19</sup> Antiquity, and to a large extent the modern period, regarded minerals as infinite, which they were, relative to the technology used. Some argued that their abundance was proof that they ought to be extracted and used. Today, however, with vast levels of extraction and technological advances, it is known that minerals are finite and non-renewable.<sup>20</sup>

Georgius Agricola, published *De Re Metallica* in 1556, which defends the right to extract minerals from the belly of the earth. According to Agricola, “there has always been the greatest disagreement amongst men concerning metals and mining, some praising, others utterly condemning them.”<sup>21</sup> His work refutes claims made by detractors to mining – be it with regard to nature’s destruction, the utility of minerals, the dangers for miners, or the wickedness of those who mine – regarding taking what is not offered by the earth.

*De Re Metallica*, written at the period of early European industry, had significant impact on the relationship between mining and society. Agricola’s work conceives of minerals and metals as objects and as a natural resource. This new conception transformed the view of minerals from a predominately organic to a scientific one. According to Bardi, *De Re Metallica*, “was a milestone in the science of mineralogy, and put to rest forever the idea that minerals were living creatures.”<sup>22</sup> Agricola’s work “expanded upon by the early pioneers of modern geology like Nicolas Steno, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, William Hutton, and many others” and in so doing represents a scientific argument and rationale for mining.<sup>23</sup> His work was an attempt to legitimise the extraction and exploitation of minerals and metals.

The work of Merchant importantly reminds us:

If the new values connected to mining were positive, and mining was viewed as a means to improve human condition, as they were with Agricola, and later with Bacon, then the comparison could be turned upside down. Sanctioning mining sanctioned the rape or commercial exploration of the earth – a clear illustration of how constraints can change to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 30–41.

<sup>20</sup> Current mineral resource depletion and availability figures show that extraction of minerals increased exponentially from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, then again from the mid-20th century and continue in an upward trend.

<sup>21</sup> Georgius Agricola, *De Re Metallica [1556]*, trans. H Clark Hoover and L Henry Hoover (London: The Mining Magazine, 1912), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Bardi, *Extracted*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

sanctions through the demise of frameworks and their associated values as the needs, wants and purposes of society change. The organic framework, in which the Mother Earth image was a moral restraint against mining, was literally undermined by the new commercial activity.<sup>24</sup>

Mining of minerals and metals became tied to a particular system of production and new economy; it was critical to creating and sustaining a new industry - the production and supply of goods and services. Mining further became linked to the technology, science, economy and a new body politic of the period – the scientific and modern world. The social, economic and environmental forces and interrelated changes at work shaped ideas around mining in the seventeenth century that are still evident today. At the centre of these shifts towards capitalism and industrialisation was the transformation of human labour, as well as metals and minerals, into private property—objects to be bought and sold at the market. This process of objectification and alienation were interwoven with the introduction of waged work and private property claims of both land and the earth below it.

Naomi Klein indicates that extractivism is “a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth.”<sup>25</sup> It is about power over nature, as Merchant would articulate it. Klein argues that extractivism is

the reduction of life into objects for the use of others, giving them no integrity or value of their own—turning living complex ecosystems into ‘natural resources’ ... the reduction of human beings either into labour to be brutally extracted, pushed beyond limits ... In an extractivist economy, the interconnections among these various objectified components of life are ignored; the consequences of severing them are of no concern.<sup>26</sup>

This is a sharp observation and brings to the fore the dehumanisation and objectification of people associated with mining.

Lewis Mumford’s *Technics and Civilization* explains that historically, mining was not seen as a human art but rather as a form of punishment. “During the whole of antiquity it was meant to be burdensome [hence] no one entered the mine in civilized

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<sup>24</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs Climate* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 169.

<sup>26</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 169.

states until relatively modern times except as a prisoner of war, a criminal or a slave.”<sup>27</sup> Mining was conceived of as barbaric and only deemed fit for the soulless. His work shows that unlike other industries, mining made limited technical progress until the fifteenth century. Mumford argued that “before new industrial process could take hold on a great scale, a reorientation of wishes, habits, ideas and goals were necessary.”<sup>28</sup> Agricola’s work is one such attempt to reorient any misgivings towards mining. From about the sixteenth century on “mining sets the pattern for capitalist exploitation.”<sup>29</sup> According to Mumford, “no other industry was as closely bound up with modern capitalism as mining.”<sup>30</sup> He argued that unlike any previous mode of production, “the routine of the mine involves an unflinching assault upon the physical environment: every stage in it is a magnification of power.”<sup>31</sup>

#### **4.4 Mining in the development of South African capitalism**

In the case of South Africa, the centrality of mining in the development of modern capitalism was paramount. Jade Davenport writes that “the mineral revolution enabled the introduction of an aggressively organized and racially dominated form of industrial capitalism, an economic system that dominated the South African socio-political and fiscal area for more than a century.”<sup>32</sup> It was the discovery of diamonds and gold in 1867 and 1886 respectively in the North, beyond the Cape Colony and outside the authority of the British Empire, which hastened its expansion into and annexation of South Africa. This mineral revolution of the 1870s shaped much of modern South Africa.<sup>33</sup> Martin Legassick wrote that “full-blooded capitalism developed late in South Africa in comparison with Europe and the US. The real impact of capitalism came only with the discovery of gold and diamonds, in the mineral revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, as the world economy was undergoing the transition to imperialism.”<sup>34</sup>

The Cape Colony’s Native Law enabled expansion and appropriation of land for mineral access. This law was propelled by the imperialist project of the period as

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 67.

<sup>28</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Jade Davenport, *Digging Deep: A History of Mining in South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2014), 2.

<sup>33</sup> The expansion of the British empire into Africa, led by Cecil Rhodes’s vision, has left its lasting mark on the landscape of South Africa, from the unification of the Republic of South African to the creation of an industrial state.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. 2007), 441.

well as the discovery of gold and diamonds. It was this that motivated the Rhodes administration to annex the Northern Cape. Less than ten years thereafter the Glen Grey Act was passed in 1894, which “denied the votes to African[s] ... restricted the size of African-owned freeholds, restricted inheritance rights and imposed a head tax – all measures to ensure labour migration.”<sup>35</sup> Rhodes started the process of amalgamation of small claim holders and “sought oligopolistic control of the mines.”<sup>36</sup>

Legassick noted that the “mines required large amounts of cheap labour. They used the pre-existing structures of colonialism and racism, and transformed them into structures of segregation to generate this supply as cheap black migrant labour ... The ideology and structures of segregation prepared the way for the ideology and structures of apartheid.”<sup>37</sup> Supporting this point about pre-existing structures, Klein argues that “extractivism ran rampant under colonialism” as mining “was intimately tied up with imperialism ... bound up with notions of racial superiority, because in order to have sacrifice zones, you need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of the sacrifice.”<sup>38</sup>

After South African unification and the establishment of mining monopolies, mining took on a particular economic industrial approach. This extraction laid the foundation for South Africa’s mineral energy accumulation strategy as well as its particular form of racially skewed wealth inequality. Jan Glazewski says that “[m]ining has historically been the mainstay of the South African economy and has shaped both its social and environmental fabric. The urban and industrial landscape has been dramatically influenced according to the location of minerals.”<sup>39</sup> The mineral revolution in South Africa was key to the modernisation of the country. Rapid infrastructural development and accompanying technologies had to keep abreast with the mineral revolutions. The development of mining in South Africa propelled the development of new mining towns and cities, urbanisation, new forms of organisations and migrant labour influxes into these new towns and cities. Of equal significance is how mining was intimately linked to the development of new

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<sup>35</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002), xxxiv.

<sup>36</sup> Rotberg, *The Founder*, xxx.

<sup>37</sup> Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy*, 441.

<sup>38</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 170.

<sup>39</sup> Jan Glazewski, *The Environmental Law in South Africa* (Durban: Butterworths/Lexus Nexus, 2000), 455.

industries, manufacturing, capital and the financial sector.<sup>40</sup> The very creation of the South African apartheid industrial state rested upon the process of mineral extraction.

The work of Ben Fine and Zavareh Rustomjee has shown how the mineral-energy complex is at the centre of South Africa's economy and how inextricably linked the mineral-energy and financial systems are to wealth and power concentration.<sup>41</sup> Legassick noted that "according to Fine and Rustomjee ... since 1945 industrialisation was based on forward linkages from mining and energy (for example, electricity from coal) into such sectors as steel and chemicals, rather than backwards from consumer goods."<sup>42</sup> Others such as Patrick Bond and Hein Marais show how the mineral-energy complex has played a central role in the South African transition and its limits.<sup>43</sup>

The mineral revolution and mining was seen as the driving force behind industrialisation and was the backbone of the South Africa capitalist economy. The economy was firmly held by white monopoly capital. It stands to reason then, that policy discussions about wealth distribution, inequality and transformation would focus attention on this sector.

## **4.5 Creating mineral wealth to serve the people**

### ***4.5.1 The Freedom Charter, Ready to Govern, the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act [No. 28 of 2002] (MPRDA) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)***

The ANC's *Ready to Govern* document was the basis for policies in the new dispensation.<sup>44</sup> It draws on the national liberation movement's Freedom Charter. Section 9, titled Mining and Energy Policy, sets out that

[t]he mineral wealth beneath the soil is the national heritage of all South Africans, including future generations. As a diminishing resource it should be used with due regard to socio-

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<sup>40</sup> See Ben Fine and Zavareh Rustomjee, *The Political Economy of South Africa: From Minerals-Energy Complex to Industrialisation* (UK: Hurst, 1996), 91.

<sup>41</sup> See Fine and Rustomjee, *Political Economy of South Africa*.

<sup>42</sup> Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy*, 442.

<sup>43</sup> See Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005). Also see, Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2010). Also see Donna Andrews, "Political Economy of the Growth and Ascendancy of the Finance Sector in post-apartheid South Africa" (MA thesis, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> African National Congress, "Ready to Govern: ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa," adopted at the National Conference, 1992.

economic needs and environmental conservation. The ANC will, in consultation with unions and employers, introduce a mining strategy, which will involve the introduction of a new system of taxation, financing, mineral rights and leasing. The strategy will require the normalisation of miners' living and working conditions, with full trade union rights and an end to private security forces on the mines. In addition, the strategy will, where appropriate, involve public ownership and joint ventures.<sup>45</sup>

As a precursor to the mineral and mining policy, the democratic state acknowledged that minerals are not infinite and are, in fact, diminishing in quantity. It took a sustainability approach, arguing the importance of balancing future generations' needs against current socio-economic and environmental considerations. Yet, a bigger consideration was that the state saw mining as a key driver to meet society's needs and address the legacy of apartheid's skewed racial development. They sought to do this within a market-based framework.

The MPRDA and subsequent amendments legislate over the vast natural mineral resources of the country. The Act reflects the developmental agenda of the country and states that it has "to make provision for equitable access to and sustainable development of the nation's mineral and petroleum resources; and to provide for matters connected therewith."<sup>46</sup> The Act legislates that the State is the custodian of mineral rights and oversees the leasing of these rights.

The objectives of the broad-based socio-economic empowerment charter for the South African mining and mineral industry are "to promote employment and advance the social and economic welfare of mine communities and major sending areas; to promote beneficiation of the South Africa's mineral commodities; and promote sustainable development and growth of the mining industry."<sup>47</sup> Putting an end to single-man hostel dwellings, poor living conditions, the apartheid colour bar and segregation in mines is necessary, but side-steps hard questions and honest discussions about what "mining for development" means in the context of the current ecological crisis and acknowledging climate change destruction related to mining.

In post-apartheid policy the new discussions on minerals and mining sought to replace the archaic and discriminatory legislation of the past. The first mineral

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<sup>45</sup> African National Congress, "Ready to Govern," Section 9.

<sup>46</sup> Republic of South Africa, Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act [No. 28 of 2002].

<sup>47</sup> Republic of South Africa, "The Broad-based Socio-economic Empowerment Charter for the South African Mining and Mineral Industry" (South Africa: Department of Mineral Resources, September, 2010), 1.

legislation was the Mines and Works Act 12 of 1911, followed by the Mines and Works Act 27 of 1956, which effectively instantiated the “colour bar” on the mines with regards to jobs and placed restrictions on ownership and control of the mines.<sup>48</sup> The Minerals Act 50 in 1991 replaced this earlier legislation. Post-apartheid legislation is led by the MPRDA of 2002; related legislature includes: the Mining Titles Registration Act 16 of 1967, the Mine Health and Safety Act 29 of 1996, the National Water Act 36 of 1998, the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 and the National Heritage Resources Act 36 of 1999. The later Acts reflect the social gains won by anti-apartheid constituencies, especially related to worker and environment safety.<sup>49</sup>

The MPRDA of 2002 legislates that all minerals belong to the nation as articulated in early liberation documents, specifically the Freedom Charter. The objectives set out by the Act are “(a) to recognise the internationally accepted right of the State to exercise sovereignty over all the mineral and petroleum resources within the Republic; and (b) to give effect to the principle of the State’s custodianship of the nation’s mineral and petroleum resources.”<sup>50</sup> The MPRDA draws on not only an intergenerational discourse but also an ecological discourse of custodianship and sovereignty. This particular framing evokes a sense of righting the injustices of the past. The mineral resources are to be governed and stewardship taken on by a democratically elected state. But what does this effectively mean? Is the state the custodian for world markets or mining companies? Does BEE mean redistribution to a new elite or for the general good?

As custodian, the state decides who are the necessary stakeholders. The 1998 White Paper on minerals and mining policy reflects the various stakeholder interests

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<sup>48</sup> Republic of South Africa, Mines and Works Act [No. 27 of 1956] *Union Gazette Extraordinary* (1956), accessed March 3, 2015, [https://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Act%2027%20of%201956\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Act%2027%20of%201956_0.pdf); Republic of South Africa, Mines and Work Act [No.12 of 1911].

<sup>49</sup> Republic of South Africa, Minerals Act [No. 50 of 1991], *Government Gazette* 311, no. 13253 (1991), accessed April 22, 2014, [https://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/a50\\_1991.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/a50_1991.pdf); Republic of South Africa, Mining Titles Registration Act [No. 16 of 1967] *Government Gazette Extraordinary*, no. 1670 (1967), accessed October 7, 2013, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Act%2016%20of%201967.pdf>; Department of Minerals and Energy, Mine Health and Safety Act [No. 29 of 1996], *Government Gazette* 372, no. 17242 (1996), accessed April 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Act29of1996s.pdf>; Republic of South Africa, National Water Act [No. 36 of 1998], *Government Gazette* 398, no. 19182 (1998), accessed April 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/a36-98.pdf>; Republic of South Africa, National Environmental Management Act [No. 107 of 1998], *Government Gazette* 401, no. 19519 (1998), accessed October 7, 2013, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/a107-98.pdf>; Republic of South Africa, National Heritage Resources Act [No. 36 of 1999], *Government Gazette* 406, no. 19974 (1999), accessed April 22, 2014, <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/a25-99.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Republic of South Africa, Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act [No. 28 of 2002], *Government Gazette*, 448, no. 23922 (2002), 18.



and consultations, which the “Ready to Govern” document referred to. The mining industry was seen as the primary stakeholder and the state would assure market-based and stable macroeconomic policy, creating an ideal business climate and an environment conducive for mineral development. The second stakeholders were the mining sector unions, whose concerns are outlined under the section titled “People Issues” and predominately relate to health and safety, housing, migrant labour and downscaling. A third was the environmental lobby, which placed pressure on the state to ensure its custodian role and the implementation of environmental laws, norms and standards.

The state was a key stakeholder and driver, seeking to garner authority over the previous whites-only sector, to collect revenue and transform its political clout over an historically powerful sector. It sought to do this through establishing new governance structures as well as acting as a custodian and arbitrator of the nation’s natural resources. It further saw its role to transform the sector, with a specific understanding that the problems in the mining sector were mainly due to racial inequity that had been established in the past.

In seeking to address this inequality, the MPRDA fostered black economic empowerment in the belief that this could mend the historically apartheid-led mining sector.<sup>51</sup> It drew on various BEE models such as equity ratios and quotas, mining allocation rights, preferential financial and leading schemes and so on. For redress in the mining sector, the Act “dispensed with the notion of mineral rights or rights to minerals which before 1 May 2004 were held by private persons.”<sup>52</sup> In so doing, the MPRDA sought to change ownership distribution, seeking to give advantage to the previously disenfranchised.

Gavin Capps argues that the MPRDA of 2002 has not lived up to its promises.<sup>53</sup> He claims that deracialisation of the mineral sector and nationalising minerals rights has not translated into social transformation or redistribution but instead was “designed to accelerate capital accumulation.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>51</sup> Gavin Capps, “A Bourgeois Reform with Social Justice? The Contradictions of the Minerals Development Bill and Black Economic Empowerment in the South Africa Platinum Mining Industry,” *Review of African Political Economy* 39 (2012): 316, accessed August 17, 2012, doi:10.1080/03056244.

<sup>52</sup> Minister of Mineral Resources and Others v Sishen Iron Ore Company (Pty) Ltd and Another (CCT 51/13) [2013] ZACC 45; 2014 (2) BCLR 212 (CC); 2014 (2) SA 603 (CC) (12 December 2013), accessed April 17, 2014, <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2013/45.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Capps, “A Bourgeois Reform with Social Justice?” 315.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 316, 317, 330.

deracialisation of mineral licenses or mine ownership has not altered or improved the socio-economic conditions of those previously disadvantaged. He argues that the Minerals Development Bill (MDB), which later became the MPDRA, was a policy in which the “state’s influence within the mining industry would be ‘confined to orderly regulation and the encouragement of equal opportunities for all citizens in mineral development.’”<sup>55</sup>

The MPDRA, Mining Charter and BEE policies have created a small black mining elite, which continues to mushroom with seemingly little regard for mining-affected communities, workers and their environment. The Mining Charter notes that “it is government’s stated policy that whilst playing a facilitating role in the transformation of the ownership profile of the mining industry it will allow the market to play a key role in achieving this end and it is not the government’s intention to nationalise the mining industry.”<sup>56</sup> This thus begs the question of whether and how the deracialisation of the mining sector improves the living and socio-economic conditions of mineworkers and mining communities.

#### ***4.5.2 The National Development Plan***

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP), published in 2012, advances various articulations of how the ANC-led state views concerns for the environment and development related to minerals and mining. The 2011 state-commissioned diagnostic report says that the “economy is unsustainably resource intensive” and that the country “is not only a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions – it is also particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change on health, livelihoods, water and food, with a disproportionate impact on the poor, especially women and children.”<sup>57</sup> The chief concern of the NDP, despite the diagnostic report, is that “too few people work” and therefore argues for economic growth as the key means to development.<sup>58</sup>

The NDP aims to use South Africa’s so-called comparative advantage of minerals and mining, to grow the economy. According to the NDP, to grow the economy they propose “increasing exports, focusing on those areas where South

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>56</sup> Department of Mineral Resources, “Mining Charter: Broad Based Socio-economic Empowerment Charter for the South African Mining Industry of 13 August 2004,” *Government Gazette*, no. 26661, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.dmr.gov.za/publications/summary/24-mining-charter/571-gg-26661-miningcharter-13-aug-2004.html>

<sup>57</sup> National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future—Make it Work*, (National Planning Commission: Presidency of South Africa, Pretoria, 2012), 18, 23.

<sup>58</sup> National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan*, 18.

Africa already has endowments and comparative advantage, such as mining, construction, mid-skill manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing, higher education, tourism and business services.”<sup>59</sup>

Although “South Africa holds large global shares in platinum group metals, gold, diamonds, manganese, coal, iron ore and uranium” the NDP states that “over the past decade, domestic mining has failed to match the global growth trend in mineral exports due to poor infrastructure, alongside regulatory and policy frameworks that hinder investment.”<sup>60</sup> The NDP argues that South Africa should capitalise on the commodities demand. To do so, measures should be taken to improve infrastructure and stability to attract investors, and “this will enable the mining sector to deploy the skills, resources, know-how and capital that are available, and allow government to raise much more tax revenue than it does at present.”<sup>61</sup>

At the core of this plan is a neoliberal approach to development, where the state sees economic growth as having a trickle-down effect, thus enabling it to distance itself from earlier notions of redistribution and equitable use of natural resources and endowments. The role of the state is now to ensure that nothing hinders “doing business” in South Africa. At best, the state will introduce “policy instruments to encourage the private sector to change ownership patterns includ[ing] voluntary scorecards, procurement regulations, licensing arrangements (such as in telecommunications and mining) and development finance.”<sup>62</sup> This is in keeping with the narrow BEE transformation approach of the state.

It is unclear exactly how the NDP intends to meaningfully reduce the unsustainable resource economy when it appears that the economy will continue to reinforce its mineral-energy fossil fuel industrialisation approach. The NDP notes that “research suggests that it is possible to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity production and still grow the minerals and mineral processing sectors.”<sup>63</sup> It is, however, clear that the NDP continues on an old growth path of comparative advantage and extractivism while it tinkers around the ecological crisis.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 38.

## **4.6 Mineral and mining policy embedded within a global discourse of sustainable development**

To view the South African mineral and mining policy outside a global frame would miss the overlapping and inherited global discourse of sustainable development and minerals as a natural resource. This discourse influenced the MPRDA, although the South African mineral and mining policy takes on its own particular permutations in seeking racial redress.

### ***4.6.1 Inter-generational and intra-generational equity***

The state, private sector actors and civil society embrace the language of sustainable development, which adopts an ecological discourse of inter- and intra-generational equity. Already as early as 1972, the Stockholm declaration stated that “the natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.”<sup>64</sup> The idea of ensuring “equity” of natural resources between and within generations is a hallmark of this discourse.

In 1987, the United Nations report, “Our Common Future,” used and sharpened the intergenerational discourse. This report states that “many present efforts to guard and maintain human progress, to meet human needs, and to realize human ambitions are simply unsustainable ... They draw too heavily, too quickly, on already overdrawn environmental resource accounts to be affordable far into the future without bankrupting those accounts.”<sup>65</sup> The report went on to say that “[t]hey may show profit on the balance sheets of our generation, but our children will inherit the losses. We borrow environmental capital from future generations with no intention or prospect of repaying.”<sup>66</sup> To this end, they further added: “humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm 1972,” accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un-documents.net/unchedec.htm>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, “Report on the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future,” (United Nations, 1987), 14.

<sup>67</sup> Brundtland, “Report on the World Commission,” 15.

Dorceta Taylor writes that the intergenerational discourse predates the United Nations Declarations and Summits. She refers to this framing of ecological injustice as the “inequities of intergenerational and intragenerational resource consumption” and states that it can be traced back to the start of environmental discourse.<sup>68</sup> It has been deployed effectively ever since. She outlines how, from 1906, John Muir and Gifford Pinchot used intergenerational injustice arguments.<sup>69</sup> Muir, for instance, argued that the current generation had to be mindful of future generations.<sup>70</sup> Pinchot challenged this, according to Taylor, and “considered the rights of current generations to be paramount in resource decision making.”<sup>71</sup> He argued that it was unjust to preserve resources for future generations at the expense of current generations.<sup>72</sup>

This generational discourse is embedded within the mineral and metals framework. The MPRDA negotiates an imperative of this generation to act in the interests of future generations. It is obliged to extract now to promote current development but not at the expense of future generations. The injustice is framed as the current generation should not deprive the next generation of resources or mineral wealth. But it also constrains the right of the current generation to access resources, given the legacy of apartheid.

There are three interrelated assumptions, which are necessary to problematise in relation to how the generational discourse is employed in this context of minerals and metals policy. First, is the assumption that the current generation has to a large extent created and contributed to the current ecological crisis. Second, is the assumption that this generation knows what is best for the next generation. Now, presumably, they are able to act (where before they were unable to) in the interest of future generations. Third, is the assumption that this generation has the tools to overcome its own inadequacies without any historical trace of how it has come to inhabit the current ecological crisis.

The solution to the ecological crisis should be seen as the coming together of past, present and future generations, as it requires new ways of being, acting and thinking, not for tomorrow, but for now. The idea of inter-generational equity and the

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<sup>68</sup> Dorceta E. Taylor, “The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 43 No. 4 (January 2000): 522.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor, “Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm,” 522.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

mantra of the sustainable development discourse, with its constant reference to “doing right” for future generations, obscures not “doing right” for the current generation – the women and men who are made invisible and who experience the consequences of ecological degradation daily.

The intergenerational discourse uses a strategy of infinite referral. This allows for a sustainable development project, premised on the logic of efficiency, to go undetected. It evokes concerns and notions of justice for future generations but it does not allow for collective action today in meaningful, concrete ways, for example, to enforce measures to decrease global warming.

#### ***4.6.2 Converging economic and environmental values***

Key to the sustainability approach, is an assumption that economic and environmental values can converge based on an understanding that “of all things in the world, people are the most precious” and in this regard, “there are broad vistas for the enhancement of environmental quality and the creation of a good life ... For the purpose of attaining freedom in the world of nature, man must use knowledge to build, in collaboration with nature, a better environment.”<sup>73</sup> The sustainable development approach sees better living conditions as only commensurate with growth.

In 1992, the Rio Earth Summit agreed on the main analysis of the 1987 report, “Our Common Future.” This was significant because it was a global acknowledgement of the constraints placed on the planet, and represented a victory for the environmental movement. Ten years later, in 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) attempted to re-ignite commitments to the core principles of facilitating harmony between values of economic growth and environmental protection. The critiques and evidence levelled at two such contradictory and divergent principles could not be accommodated. Instead, the WSSD side stepped the contradictions and sought to acknowledge the huge strides made in development and improvements in countries of the global North after the end of the World War II. Despite the gains of these advancements in technology, science and economic growth in the global North, however, the world has experienced increases in poverty, widening gaps of inequality between the countries of the North and South, environmental degradation and ecological stress. The WSSD analysis

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<sup>73</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm 1972,” accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un-documents.net/unchedec.htm>.

hides the fact that the gains and economic growth in the global North after World War II have been based on the plunder of nature and the super-exploitation of the South.

The WSSD fostered a discourse of sustainable development, which encouraged Third World countries to follow the development model of the North. If these countries replicate the gains of the global North, then the global South, it is alleged, can catch up and narrow the poverty gap. Industrialised countries need to manage resource use in order to allow developing countries to meet the needs of their societies, as well as ensure future generations a healthy environment. David Carruthers writes that “sustainable development now stands as the dominant discourse on the environment-development problematic” because it promises to “defuse longstanding tensions between environmental protection and economic growth, [as] nearly everyone favors it, including individuals, firms, national and local governments, militaries, and the gamut of non-state actors.”<sup>74</sup>

With sustainable development as a broad, all-inclusive and non-prescriptive principle, countries around the world have embraced the ecological discourse of economic growth with environmental protection, thus uncritically reinforcing the current economic development model.<sup>75</sup> Governments, North and South, their institutions, international agencies, policies and guidelines seek socio-economic-political-environmental compacts with various stakeholders. In so doing, James Meadowcroft argues that the concept of sustainable development is “intimating both change and continuity, it urges the abandonment of inequitable and environmentally unsound practices while avoiding any suggestion of direct assault on established centres of political and economic power.”<sup>76</sup> An account of the past 40 years, shows an intensification of the commodification and privatisation of nature, extorted through austere neoliberal policies. The most vivid examples of nature being sold off and commodified are seen through the World Trade Organisations (WTO) trade and trade-related agreements.

John Dryzek and David Schlosberg write that sustainable development is an approach based on a belief that “economic growth and environmental protection can

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<sup>74</sup> David Carruthers, “From Opposition to Orthodoxy: The Remaking of Sustainable Development,” *Journal of Third World Studies* XVIII (2001): 93.

<sup>75</sup> Carruthers, “Opposition to Orthodoxy,” 93.

<sup>76</sup> James Meadowcroft, “Sustainable Development: A New (ish) Idea for New Century,” *Political Studies* 48 (2000): 370–87, 278.

be brought together in productive harmony on a global scale.”<sup>77</sup> They further add that a “commitment to redistribution from the rich to the poor now and in the future is thrown in for good measure, though this redistribution should not prove especially painful for the rich.”<sup>78</sup> Dryzek and Schlosberg suggest a falsehood inherent in the sustainable development approach as well as a misreading of the causes of the current strain on the environment. The sustainable development framework works within the current system that has contributed much to ecological destruction. How then, as an approach, would it be able to offer any genuine transformation?

If sustainable development works to maintain the current economic system, then it is important to recognise that the system of capitalism imposes certain limits.<sup>79</sup> Wood asks, “what kinds of oppression does capitalism require, and what kinds of emancipation can it tolerate?”<sup>80</sup> According to her, the system is self-reliant on an “expansionary, competitive and exploitative logic of capitalist accumulation.”<sup>81</sup> She argues that capitalism cannot

avoid ecological devastation. It may be able to accommodate some degree of ecological care, especially when the technology of environmental protection is itself profitably marketable. But the essential irrationality of the drive for capital accumulation, which subordinates everything to the requirements of the self-expansion of capital and so-called growth, is unavoidably hostile to ecological balance.<sup>82</sup>

#### **4.7 Nationalisation of mineral wealth**

Calls for nationalisation or people-centred mining or to “make natural resources work for the people” are seen as alternatives to the dominant approach to mining.<sup>83</sup> Historically, nationalisation has been presented as an alternative to extractivism. The alternative is to prioritise state sovereignty and local people over transnational corporations. Eduardo Gudynas says that “beyond the ownership of the resources, the rules and operations of productive processes that focus on competitiveness,

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<sup>77</sup> John Dryzek and David Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 257.

<sup>78</sup> Dryzek and Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth*, 257.

<sup>79</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Capitalism and Human Emancipation,” *New Left Review* 1/167 (1988): 4, accessed September 24, 2014, <https://newleftreview.org/1/167/ellen-meiksins-wood-capitalism-and-human-emancipation>.

<sup>80</sup> Wood, “Capitalism and Human Emancipation,” 4.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> During apartheid these calls were made by NUMSA and NUM, and could be found in the Freedom Charter.



efficiency, maximising of profits and externalising impacts are the same as before.”<sup>84</sup> In the late eighties and through the nineties these calls were echoed in people-centred development demands. In the early 2000s they were part of the broader calls of the anti-privatisation and anti-globalisation movements. Alberto Acosta points out that “the extractivist mode of accumulation seems to be at the heart of the production policies of both neoliberal and progressive governments.”<sup>85</sup>

Today, calls for nationalisation of mines can be heard from the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). At the Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI), a civil society event, the overarching theme was “make natural resources work for the people.” Articulations for a more people-centred mining approach are prevalent within groups who are challenging mining corporations for compliance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social economic justice.

The Bench Marks Foundation’s report “Coping with Unsustainability” says that the Lonmin mining company did not meet the minimum standards of CSR, outlined in the King Reports.<sup>86</sup> The report states that “Lonmin fails to live up to its own sustainability goals. If it is true that it performs better or much better than most of its mining company peers, which we have no reason to question, its failure indicates that South African mining in general is not sustainable.”<sup>87</sup> Bench Marks shows the lack of positive social and environmental progress over a ten-year reporting period. The report concludes, “Lonmin Plc has won awards for its environmental and socio-economic performance. The company says it is ‘best in class’ in sustainability. But it is running an unsustainable project. If Lonmin is ‘best in class’, platinum mining in South Africa is not environmentally, socially or politically sustainable.”<sup>88</sup>

The *Maximising the developmental impact of the people’s mineral assets: State Intervention in the Minerals Sector* (SIMS) policy discussion document commissioned by the ANC is an attempt to engage with a call for nationalisation of the mines and mining compliance. This is where the ANC Youth League placed nationalisation on the national political agenda in 2009. The ANC SIMS resolution

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<sup>84</sup> Alberto Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism: Two Sides of the Same Curse,” In *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*, edited by Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani (Amsterdam: TNI, 2013), 72.

<sup>85</sup> Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism,” 61.

<sup>86</sup> See King Reports on Corporate Governance I, II, II,

<https://www.saica.co.za/Technical/LegalandGovernance/King/tabid/2938/language/en-ZA/Default.aspx>.

<sup>87</sup> Bench Marks Foundation, “Policy Gap 7, Coping with Unsustainability: Lonmin 2003 – 2012 Report,” (Johannesburg: Bench Marks Foundation, October 2013), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Bench Marks Foundation, “Policy Gap 7,” xv.

argued that the development state “... must ensure that our national resource endowments, including land, water, minerals and marine resources, are exploited to effectively maximise the growth, development and employment potential embedded in such national assets, and not purely for profit maximisation.”<sup>89</sup>

The ANC SIMS position is mining-for-development. It is therefore not about any principled position against mining; rather it is about ensuring economic growth. The Economic Freedom Front (EFF) policy on nationalisation of minerals and metals is less vague. It puts forward that “owing to the character of the South African economy and the aspirations of the people for economic freedom, state ownership and control of strategic sectors of the economy should be the foundation for sustainable economic transformation in South Africa.”<sup>90</sup> At the heart of the EFF’s proposed economic transformation call is that “[t]he transfer of wealth from the minority should fundamentally focus on the commanding heights of the economy. This should include minerals, metals, banks, energy production ...”<sup>91</sup>

The EFF says that private companies are short changing the poor, the communities around the mines and the country in which mining occurs because the revenue leaves the country. The problem lies not with extraction and mining per se, but rather with the fact that only a few people benefit. The problem is the lack of distribution and the inequitable share of the profits. Many people should benefit and it is unfair that the lion’s share of wealth is disproportionately claimed by the already wealthy. One aspect of the EFF’s and ANC Youth League’s calls for nationalisation appears concerned with challenging South African white monopoly capital.

The EFF’s call for “economic freedom in our lifetime” is an important aspect of an emancipatory project. Their call for nationalisation is tied to this, but their policy on minerals and mining does not fully account for the fallout of extractivism and the destructive nature of mining on people and nature. Nationalisation of mines do not take into account the ecological, social, health and long-term economic fallouts of mining. Samantha Hargreaves argues that resource nationalisation can also be referred to as neo-extractivism, which is

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<sup>89</sup> African National Congress, “Maximising the Development Impact,” 2.

<sup>90</sup> Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), “On Nationalisation,” accessed March 2015, <http://efffighters.org.za/policy/nationalisation-of-mines/>.

<sup>91</sup> EFF, “On Nationalisation.”

the growth of laws and policies that strengthen the role of the state in the exploitation and ownership of natural resources, presented by the South African state, global and regional institutions such as United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the African Development Bank, and global initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the African Progressive Panel, and international non-governmental organisations, such as Oxfam, as a reform trajectory that can support the state's national development agenda, offer greater safeguards to the environment and benefit local communities.<sup>92</sup>

It is important to ask if economic freedom is equivalent to other freedoms. Does economic freedom equal emancipation from other oppressions and exploitations?

At the current juncture, given our understanding of the multiple crises and specifically, the extent and depth of the ecological crisis, we must pause and evaluate whether nationalisation and calls for people-centred mining – serving the interests of industrialisation and development – can still be considered adequate alternatives. Are calls for mineral and metals extraction, as central to a development plan, job creation and social service delivery, a viable vehicle for an emancipatory project?

Progressive organisations take a people-centred approach to natural resources, which is primarily a social and economic account of extraction and its impact.<sup>93</sup> The approach argues that minerals and metals are public goods as opposed to private goods and, therefore, should not be sold as a commodity for private enrichment. Reclaiming minerals and metals as part of the global commons and social goods is important and begins to break down the alienation espoused when assigning minerals and metals as commodities.

At a broad level this is significant in a society where profits trump community well-being. This is an emphasis on equitable sharing of mineral and metal gains. The challenge however, is that extraction per se is not being challenged but rather issues of distribution. A broader account of the ecological crisis and the mining problematic is required. Distributional questions neglect the ecological havoc created by extraction on both the natural environment and mine-affected communities.

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<sup>92</sup> Samantha Hargreaves, "Extractivism, its Deadly Impacts and Struggles Towards a Post-extractivist Future," in *Greening the South African Economy*, ed. Mark Swilling et al. (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2016), 153.

<sup>93</sup> People-centred mining is contrary to market-centred or private-centred approach to natural resources.

Calls to “make natural resources work for the people” or “nationalise the mines” continue to prioritise extraction over both people and nature. These calls falsely assume that the only route to jobs is through extractivism and industrial development. It is these very mining jobs that perpetuate alienation. Is it possible to conceive of livelihoods, not jobs, as essential to an emancipatory project? In other words, could we imagine work that is not the subjugation of selling one’s labour to a boss on the market, but rather that which “overcomes ego-centeredness,” “utilises and develops [one’s] faculties,” and “join[s one] with other people in a common task, to bring forth goods and services needed for a becoming existence.”<sup>94</sup> Could we incorporate the daily, unwaged work that so many do into a livelihood where what they do is acknowledged work, made visible and not diminished as less valuable?

Calls for nationalisation assume that the problem in mining lies with the governance of mineral resources. It does not address as problematic the *ownership over* natural resources by many or the few. The prism of sustainable development hides this problem when it suggests that a balance can be created between extraction, economic development and environmental protection. This is perpetuated on multiple fronts, including civil society groups. According to Farai Maguwu and Christelle Terreblanche, there was an open acknowledgement at the 7<sup>th</sup> Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) in 2016 that “mining is harmful. Nevertheless, all argued that mining must continue and can be reined in: Mining is good for Africa because Africa needs development and must grow.”<sup>95</sup> This discourse needs to be disrupted, as it closes off other possibilities and alternatives. Equally problematic is that it rests on an idea that we need to produce more commodities.

The AMI 2016 communiqué, which is a far less bold statement than that made by the EFF and does not call for nationalisation, states that it is “desirous to serve as a link for dialogue between communities, business and government.”<sup>96</sup> It furthermore calls “upon African governments, the United Nations, African Union, international financial institutions, transnational mining corporations and other corporate mining entities, [and] fellow civil society organisations to join hands with us in pursuing

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<sup>94</sup> Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 58.

<sup>95</sup> Farai Maguwu and Christelle Terreblanche, “We Need a Real ‘Alternatives to Mining’ Indaba,” *Pambazuka News*, accessed February 16, 2016,

<http://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/we-need-real-%E2%80%99Alternatives-mining%E2%80%9D-indaba>.

<sup>96</sup> Alternative Mining Indaba, “AMI2016 Communiqué,” accessed on February 17, 2016, <http://altminingindaba.co.za/2016/02/10/ami2016-final-communique/>.

justice in the exploitation of minerals and the benefits accruing therefrom.”<sup>97</sup> The AMI call is reflective of how embedded a mining-fossil fuel development-industrial-complex is, but it also curtails and undermines alternatives to mining such as “Leave the Oil in the Soil, the Coal in the Hole, and the Fracking Shale Gas under the grass.”<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, the AMI call is dangerous in the way it reinforces the ruse built on the jargon of sustainable development.

The AMI dialogue is only possible because of a mutual pursuit “in the exploitation of minerals.” Beyond this mutual pursuit there is no equal ground, given the vastly differential power relations and interests of the groups being called upon to enter the dialogue. Equally problematic is the likening of governments and transnational corporations to each other. This points to another deceit perpetuated by mineral and metal extraction – mining corporations are not necessarily in the same place of origin as the mineral or metals extracted. Unlike minerals and metals and states, which have specific locations and borders, mining companies tend to be transnational and the parent company is often located in the North. States are meant to be accountable, transparent and governed by forms of democratic principles. This is not the case for transnational corporations. The power and status afforded to private mining companies is at least one valid reason to consider transforming them into public or state institutions through nationalisation.

It is in this regard, that distribution and re-distribution issues could potentially be tackled with nationalisation or people-centred mining. This, however, does not tackle the deceit hidden by all forms of mining – be it small-scale, artisanal, female, national, private, joint, or BEE. That deceit is the normative stance that makes extraction permissible. In other words, “mining is harmful but necessary and essential.” This stance is held despite the evidence of the negative social, economic, political and ecological impact.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, it is held despite the sub-human conditions that miners have to work in, within the extreme heat and darkness of the bowels and veins of the earth. This is where no human can or should live and where

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<sup>97</sup> Alternative Mining Indaba, “AMI2016 Communiqué.”

<sup>98</sup> Yes to Life, No to Mining, “Women Stand Their Ground,” accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.yestolifenotomining.org/declaration-women-stand-ground-big-coa/>.

<sup>99</sup> For a comprehensive argument of the negative impacts of extractivism refer to Alberto Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism.”

night and day are one – to be a miner is almost to be a “prisoner of war, a criminal or a slave.”<sup>100</sup>

Lipschitz’s *Beyond the Curse*, published by the IMF, is illustrative of the international discourse of minerals as natural resources. This discourse holds that minerals have the potential to transform societies and, in particular, well-endowed developing countries. Like AMI, the IMF seeks to “reap the benefits of resource wealth while avoiding the pitfalls” and importantly “to safeguard intergenerational equity.”<sup>101</sup> The IMF discourse appears to have similar overtones as the discourse on nationalisation, in that both assume minerals and metals are key economic drivers. *Beyond the Curse*, however, favours management of minerals being in the hands of the private sector, such as transnational corporations, and discourages a nationalisation approach.

#### **4.8 The negotiated settlement as a mining settlement?**

Moeletsi Mbeki’s account of the negotiated settlement is in many ways a reflection of how the assumptions of mining-for-development extended into the negotiated settlement and into policy and public discourse. It offers us an understanding of how economic transformation in the mining sector is conceived of broadly in South Africa and sheds light on what “making mineral wealth work for the people” means in the context of the negotiated settlement.

Economic transformation in South Africa, as outlined by Mbeki, is “parliamentary democracy + globalisation + BEE.”<sup>102</sup> Critical in the equation is that BEE “entails wealth redistribution from economic oligarchs to the black upper middle class,” and, in exchange for parliamentary democracy, the country had to agree to economic globalisation.<sup>103</sup> The economic oligarchs struck this deal so as to ensure a continued stream of cheap labour to work on the mines, as was the case during apartheid.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 67.

<sup>101</sup> Leslie Lipschitz, “Overview,” in *Beyond the Curse: Policies to Harness the Power of Natural Resources*, ed. R. Arezki, T. Gylfason, A. Sy (Washington DC: International Monetary Fund), 1–4.

<sup>102</sup> Moeletsi Mbeki, “Concept of Transformation and the Social Structure of South Africa” in *Visions of Black Economic Empowerment*, ed. G. Marcus et al. (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2007), 221.

<sup>103</sup> Mbeki, “Concepts of Transformation,” 222.

<sup>104</sup> Mbeki, “Concepts of Transformation,” 222. Francis Wilson argues that between 1946–1975, 3.6 million of man-years by area of origins came from South Africa; 3 million from Mozambique; 1.9 million from Malawi and 1.6 million from Lesotho; this totals 10 million man-years during the said period. Wilson, “Marikana Commission Mining and Migrancy Seminar,” April 9, 2015, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.marikanacomm.org.za/documents.html>.

Mbeki locates the mineral-energy complex (MEC) as central to the South African economic and political model. Drawing on Fine, as well as Marais and Terreblanche, Mbeki reasserts the particular nature of South African capitalism and how apartheid was central to ensuring cheap labour for the mineral and energy complex. He argues that the “primary objective of the economic oligarch was to ensure the preservation of the MEC.”<sup>105</sup> His analysis that “South Africa is well endowed with natural resources, especially minerals and metals ...[which] has created a unique form of capitalism ... dominated by the extraction of minerals from the ground; their processing into metals through the use of electrical power and chemicals; and their sale to the rest of the world,” is a widely held view and evident in the government policy on mineral resources.<sup>106</sup> Similar is the view that “minerals are a blessing to South Africa ... they have helped kick-start a process of capital accumulation through attracting foreign direct investors and promoting the construction of physical infrastructure.”<sup>107</sup> The endowment is a unique form of capital accumulation capacity and he posits the political economy of mineral extraction as the panacea for economic development woes in post-apartheid South Africa.

Mbeki acknowledges the weaknesses such as “wastage of non-renewable assets, dependence on import technology and capital, and overexposure to volatile world markets” as well as the MEC’s “dependence on abundant, cheap, unskilled labour.”<sup>108</sup> In his assessment, however, these weaknesses seem not to outweigh the gains. For him, the weaknesses are acceptable and acknowledged evils. His account of mining-for-development foregrounds accumulation and recognises that profits are made through the exploitation of cheap labour. The blessings of extraction and the unfortunate consequences for the worker and the environment are necessary costs for economic development for the greater good.

Mbeki asserts that the form of liberal democracy negotiated in South Africa is based on maintaining the extraction of minerals and metals. However, he does not expose the collusion between capital (be it controlled or “footloose and fancy free,” national or transnational) and the state and economic and political elite, designed to

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<sup>105</sup> Mbeki, “Concepts of Transformation,” 221.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-18.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-19.

safeguard a system that elevates capital and the market above nature, community and people.

South Africa's negotiated settlement, its form of liberal democracy and its transformation project, all aim to ensure and facilitate a functioning and protected MEC and its subsidiary as the central means for capitalist accumulation.

Mbeki's portrayal of transformation in South Africa, as well as its consequences, shows us that any challenge to mining will put pressure on the elite and the state. In making this visible, as well as making clear the nature of South African democracy and transformation and its negotiated settlement, it exposes the inherent limitations of the post-apartheid environmental policies, the Mineral and Petroleum Resources and Development Act, and attempts to tinker with the system. In this account of the negotiated settlement, we are able to see how the dominant relationship between society and nature is extended and consolidated through the process of the South African negotiated settlement.

#### **4.9 Is there an alternative to the illusion and deceits of mining?**

##### ***4.9.1 Broad focus of the mining discussion***

Global engagements and articulations on alternatives to mining are limited. There are even fewer spaces in South Africa where alternatives to mining are being discussed or where recognition of the deceits and illusions that mining produces are registered. In my concluding chapter, I will discuss one such case. It would however be a misreading to understand the call for alternatives to mining means an end to mining, as "basic or minimal mining would be necessary."<sup>109</sup> Central to the lack of engagement by the South African state with alternatives to mining, unions and civil society organisations, is their preoccupation with a particular industrial development path.

The South African state relies heavily on resource extraction and its mineral-energy complex to spur so-called economic growth; it has done so both in the past and in the post-apartheid period. The state believes this will yield jobs or at the very least prevent further retrenchments. Unions, who although knowledgeable about, and engaged in climate change debates, hold a similar sentiment and are trapped by a

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<sup>109</sup> Maguwu and Terreblanche, "We Need a Real 'Alternatives to Mining' Indaba."



preoccupation of jobs, in a system that is in deep crisis.<sup>110</sup> The unions maintain and strengthen social compacts with the state and business to prevent mining corporations from job-shedding at all costs. Media reports in 2015, for example, reflected that “the parties ... formally signed off on 10 joint interventions, ranging from joint initiatives to promote South African minerals, to agreements to enhance productivity and an agreement that, when mines were intended to be mothballed or sold, saving jobs would be prioritised.”<sup>111</sup> A key concern of the unions is workers’ jobs. This is the case even when the short-term costs are significant, and the long-term costs detrimental to mineworkers, mine-affected communities and nature.

During the apartheid period, much scholarly and research work about mining centred on labour markets, workers’ histories and the proletarianisation of migrants and its impact.<sup>112</sup> Other areas of focus have been on land dispossession, the creation of a black labour pool, migrant labour, trade unionism, capitalism and racism.<sup>113</sup> Trade unions were central in raising these issues and many progressive researchers and academics have focused much of their energy on mineworkers, unions and the appalling apartheid living conditions and exploitation.

Since the transition to democracy, the discussions in the public domain on mining, largely driven by the ANC government, have focused on mining rights, titles and state custodianship. In particular, there has been an emphasis on deracialisation of the mining sector, specifically regarding mining rights and company ownership, as expressed through the BEE agenda.<sup>114</sup> Trade unions, such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), have focused on wage negotiations as well as creating health and safety regulations that protect mineworkers.

The environmental fallout of mining, such as contamination of water causing acid mine drainage affecting quality of water, not to mention the huge water excesses,

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<sup>110</sup> See for instance Numsa’s statement on Climate Change and Class Struggle; or the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU) 2011 resolution to engage on climate change; or Vishwas Satgar, “A Trade Union Approach to Climate Justice,” *Global Labour Journal* 6 (2015): 267.

<sup>111</sup> Karl Gernetzky, “Mining Industry Unions and Government Agree on Plan to Stem Job-losses,” *Mail & Guardian*, August 31, 2015, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/mining/2015/08/31/mining-industry-unions-and-government-agree-on-plan-to-stem-job-losses> accessed.

<sup>112</sup> See Francis Wilson, *Migrant Labour in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Council of Churches, 1972).

<sup>113</sup> See Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers 1886–1924* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980). Kally Forrest’s recent work adds to this body of work by tracing the history of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa, giving us insights to union formation and its role in the struggle for liberation. See Kally Forrest, *Metal That Will Not Bend: National Union of Metalworkers South Africa 1980–1995* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011).

<sup>114</sup> For a substantial analysis see Capps, “A Bourgeois Reform with Social Justice?”

air pollution, climate change as well as community exposure to toxins and pollution, has been a key concern of environmental organisations and NGOs working on extractives.<sup>115</sup> These are critical issues. Mining-affected communities have focused on the lack of socio-economic benefits, as well as health and particularly HIV/AIDS related issues.<sup>116</sup> Scholarly work tends to focus on communal rights, governance, traditional communities' rights in mining areas and royalties. The related issues of land and mining specific to restitution and communal land have been areas of study, as are analyses of mining policy such as the MPRDA.<sup>117</sup> NGOs' main research focus has been human rights and mining. They have zoomed in on issues pertaining to accountability, transparency and CSR.<sup>118</sup> Others focus on legal rights and governance issues of custodianship and environmental rights as set out in the constitution.<sup>119</sup> Some take up issues reflecting the violation of community rights by mining companies.

AMI processes reflect these trends. One focus is on community monitoring with the intent to ensure environmental fallout and issues are addressed. This involves monitoring capacity, assessment tools, compliance of mining regulation and legislative and regulatory processes. Other focal points are artisanal and small-scale

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<sup>115</sup> David Hallows, *Toxic Futures*, gives a detailed account of the externalities, enclosures and exclusion that takes place due to mining in South Africa, as does Hallows and Munnik, *Peak Poison*. The campaigns and research done by NGOs such as GroundWork give a good idea of the impacts of mining on communities. GroundWork's specific campaign on Coal, Waste and Environmental Health makes this apparent:

<http://www.groundwork.org.za/campaigns.php>; see also Earthlife Africa's campaign on Acid Drainage and Climate Change: <http://earthlife.org.za/campaigns>; as well as WoMin's campaign(s) focusing on fossil fuels, climate change and energy, extractivism, militarisation and violence against women: <http://womin.org.za/our-work/developing-areas-of-work.html>; or Action Aid's 'Precious Metals Report' and campaign on extractives.

<sup>116</sup> See reports such as South African Catholic Bishops Conference, "The People's Charter Mining Barometer," *Advocacy Brief* 2, 2014 September; Eugene Cairncross, Sophia Kisting, Mariette Liefferink and David van Wyk, "Case study on Extractive Industries prepared for the Lancet Commission on Global Governance Report from South Africa," February 2013. They outline that throughout the mining life cycle, it is workers who face enormous health and environmental hazards and risks. Cairncross et al. list "silicosis, silico-tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, water-borne diseases, numerous cancers related to radiation and chemicals, noise induced hearing loss, dermatitis in all its forms, heat stress, asbestosis and asbestos related cancers, reproductive health problems, occupational asthma, bronchitis, neurological problems, repetitive strain injuries, work related stress and the numerous ergonomic problems of mining." Mining-Affected Communities (MACU) and WoMin bring to the fore that these health and environmental hazards are not only isolated to workers but a lived experience of communities and women in particular.

<sup>117</sup> See for instance Gavin Capps, "Victims of its Own Success? The Platinum Mining Industry and the Apartheid Mineral Property System in South Africa's Political Transition," *Review of African Political Economy* 121 (2012): 63–84. His work has for a long time analysed the community, mineral rights and communal land; and The Helen Suzman Foundation, <http://hsf.org.za/resource-centre/hsf-briefs/mining-land-and-community-in-communal-areas-i-what-could-be-achieved-and-why-it-is-not>.

<sup>118</sup> This is in keeping with the international trends and United Nation focus on mining and sustainable development since the 2010 Conference on Sustainable Development, although already reflected in the WSSD, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of 2002. Organisations such as the Bench Marks Foundation, Economic Justice Network and others have made this a focus area.

<sup>119</sup> The work of the Legal Resource Centre, Centre for Environmental Rights, and The Helen Suzman Foundation are examples of this focus of research and engagement.

mining, land, extractive industries and women. Another focus is on decriminalisation and vulnerability. The recent killing of anti-mining activists has become more prominent in South Africans' awareness and will soon become a key focus area of the human rights work being done with regards to mining.<sup>120</sup> Other focal points over the years at the AMI have been setting up commissions to investigate the establishments of markets; mainstreaming gender; and formation of guilds and associations. Mining, health and labour research mainly focuses on compliance and mitigating the most negative effects of mining.

An area of NGO focus, which is also featured in political parties' agendas with regards to mining, is on mining revenue governance. Here, the focus is on taxation and illicit financial flows.<sup>121</sup> Other lead research centres focus on barriers to mining for new entrants to the sector. Most research engagement here is on technical policy solutions, capacity building and making mining "work" as best it can for people. In many instances, this perspective is driven by the "acceptance of mining as a predetermined development path."<sup>122</sup>

A key continuity of the mining discussion, from the apartheid period into the transition to democracy and the post-apartheid period, is its framing within economic imperatives, industrialisation, modernisation and the continued bifurcation of nature and society. This places enormous limits on rethinking mining in society. Issues of redress and equity for mining-affected communities are paramount in the new South Africa. This has been framed through the discourse of black economic empowerment, equal opportunity and equal access.

Questions regarding the necessity of mining, or the necessary levels of extraction as well as the cost of mining on the environment, community and society, are mostly absent from the discussion. When these questions are considered, they are framed within an economic cost-benefit analysis, thus prioritising an economic perspective as well as reinforcing the logic of efficiency.

Conceiving of mining, not in terms of "boundless production" but rather through a sufficiency lens, has not featured in the South African mining discourse.

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<sup>120</sup> Other important examples of this research are for instance Fabio de Castro, Barbara Hogenboom and Michiel Baud, *Environmental Governance in Latin America* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Global Witness, "On Dangerous Ground," (London: Global Witness, June 2016), accessed September 28, 2016, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/reports/dangerous-ground/>.

<sup>121</sup> See AIDC's work by Dick Forslund, "The Bermuda Connection: Profit Shifting and Unaffordability at Lonmin 1999–2012," as well as parliamentary submissions in this regard.

<sup>122</sup> Masuku and Tromp, "Alternative Mining Indaba: Official Report 2015," 12.

Mining is still conceived of as central to South Africa's economic and development transformation path and makes excessive consumption the priority and norm. If we take mining as a necessary aspect of an industrialised society and recognise its negative and devastating impacts, it need not preclude that profit-making and unlimited extraction are prerequisites.

We could consider a different approach, one that is based on sufficiency as outlined by Princen in Chapter 2. In this regard, Princen's principles of intermittency, sufficiency, capping and source are means to ensure that we mine for need and not want. In so doing, we could rebalance the ecological system.

#### ***4.9.2 Deceits of mining and the illusion that mining is the solution***

The model of industrial development based on extractivism, which promises growth, jobs, disposable income, modernisation and catching up with and mirroring the North and the latest technologies, hides the social, ecological and political costs.

Simultaneously, promoters of this model create an illusion that they are able to deliver on these promises. When the promises are not delivered on, they blame it on corruption, or institutional and capacity problems. Often the hidden story of Northern countries' industrialisation is that it was and remains based on the exploitation of, and dependence on, the de-industrialisation of countries in the South.

Models of industrialisation based on extractivism as well as neo-extractivism, as outlined in Acosta's work, are dependent on logics of efficiency, enclaves, Ricardian rents, waste, consumerism, excessive profits, distorted resource allocation, clientalism and "de-nationalisation of the economy."<sup>123</sup> These logics further facilitate "the concentration and centralisation of income and wealth" as well as the consolidation of political power in the hands of a few in a way that is often characterised by state authoritarianism.<sup>124</sup> In addition, Acosta explains that this model "deterritorialises" the state. By this he means that "the state takes a relatively hands-off attitude to oil and mining enclaves, leaving the responsibility for addressing social demands ... in the hands of the companies. ... in practice, these regions are often left outside the remit of national laws altogether."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Acosta, "Extractivism and Neoextractivism," 65–69.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 67–68.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 68. For a richer and more detailed account of these issues as experienced in Latin America, refer to Gudynas, "The New Extractivism," 5–6.

The myth and illusion perpetuated by many governments, transnational corporations, global institutions, international NGOs and trade unions alike, is that mining is necessary and the best means to prosperity, development and jobs; it must be debunked. By the IMF's own account, countries richly endowed with minerals and metals show high inequality and unemployment, especially when they are extractive-dependent economies. It is an illusion that mining can create decent work. The very nature of extraction is violent. It is violent against the mineworkers, nature and mining communities. The social and environmental violence and destruction that mining creates is far from prosperous.<sup>126</sup>

The focus of unions on saving mining jobs must be interrogated.<sup>127</sup> The social compact protects and shields mining corporations from the antagonism of workers and communities. Lest we forget that mining corporations are driven by a profit motive, consider that the share profit over the past three decades has increased dramatically, whereas wages have remained stagnant.<sup>128</sup> The wage differential within companies has increased sharply, and the wages of the lowest wage earner and CEO reflects the deepening inequality. The recent study from AIDC on Lonmin Plc shows price-fixing, transfer-pricing and illicit transfer of funds. Mining companies have no interest in equitable redistribution to communities they affect. Nor do they wish to contribute revenue to the state or pay workers decent wages and provide decent housing.<sup>129</sup> The Marikana strike and wage negotiations in 2013 shows evidence of one mining corporation, as an example, stockpiling and going to great lengths to avoid "externalities" and costs.

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<sup>126</sup> For an extensive and detailed account of the destructive effects, see the Southern African technical reports presented at the Southern African People's Permanent Tribunal on TNCs, August 16–17, 2016. With regards to ACC specifically refer to the technical report by Nonhle Mbuthuma, "Amadiba Crisis Committee Technical Report Presentation" (Technical report presented at The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa, Manzini, Swaziland August 16, 2016).

<sup>127</sup> The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is the largest union in South Africa. In its 14th National Congress Report of 2012, the same year in which it celebrated its 30th year, it unequivocally reaffirmed that "[a]s we celebrate three decades of sweat, tears and sacrifice, we say: 'The struggle continues, Aluta Continua!' Our success will be measured by the safety of mine workers, a dignified dwelling, and the ability to live with loved ones. Our success will be measured on the basis of advances we make in ensuring that all our members earn a living wage."

<sup>128</sup> For a detailed outline of the stagnant wage bill, see AIDC's report and debate outlined on PoliticsWeb. One should note that AIDC argues that labour productivity has increased whilst wages have remained stagnant. See PoliticsWeb and AIDC's State of Labour 20 years after Democracy, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/is-sas-labour-productivity-in-decline>; also see [http://aidc.org.za/download/wages\\_and\\_profit/State-of-Labour.pdf](http://aidc.org.za/download/wages_and_profit/State-of-Labour.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> Dick Forslund, "The Bermuda Connection: Profit Shifting, Inequality and Unaffordability at Lonmin 1999-2012," (Cape Town: Alternative Information and Development Centre, 2015), 8-10, 37.

It is important to locate the ideas of various trade unions that seek to freeze and save mining jobs within a broader history. Trade unions in South Africa have had a long and close relationship with the national liberation movement, and therefore embody many of the ideas and perspectives of the ruling party. In particular, they tend to adopt the language and discourse of the Freedom Charter. In this regard, they have built their analysis on the postcolonial project of industrialisation, beneficiation of extractives, diversification and job creation.<sup>130</sup>

With the rolling back of import substitution and protections in the late 1980s, the opening up of the South African economy, and in particular trade and financial liberalisation, South Africa has seen the decimation of manufacturing and secondary sector jobs. Unions have lost memberships due to retrenchment, increased unemployment and the precarious nature of work in the period of globalisation. The close relationship to the tripartite alliance, the rhetoric of the national democratic revolution and BEE, combined with the dominant discourse of economic growth and sustainable development, has weakened the unions. Today, they are less responsive to the needs of the working class in general. The bureaucratisation of unions has created greater social distance between the base and leadership.

At the broader civil society level, there is a critique levelled at mining corporations. One that has been put forward is a socio-economic and environmental justice and rights-based critique. Mining is harmful - NGOs, research and progressive rights-based legal institutes and civil society groups state this forcefully. The solution they offer, however, seems not to be “Leave the Oil in the Soil, the Coal in the Hole, and the Fracking Shale Gas under the grass.”<sup>131</sup> There are few such calls. Instead, they maintain a similar approach to that of the state and unions. The mining-for-development paradigm appears hegemonic. When and where mine-affected community groups state clearly “no to mining,” their voices are drowned out with calls to “make natural resources work for the people.” The case of the Amadiba community, discussed in the concluding chapter, is one such example.

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<sup>130</sup> Unions related to mining and metals such as The National Union of Metalworkers in South Africa; National Union of Mineworkers; Allied Mining and Construction Union; The Congress of South African Unions, which is the largest federation in Africa, made clear in their 2016 central executive committee they call “for decisive state intervention in strategic sectors of the economy, including through strategic nationalisation and state ownership.” Furthermore they declared that “[w]e need more effective deployment of all state levers to advance industrialisation and the creation of decent work on a large scale.” “COSATU CEC 23-25 May 2016 Statement,” COSATU, accessed July 20, 2016, <http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=11681>.

<sup>131</sup> Yes to Life, No to Mining, “Women Stand Their Ground,” accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.yestolifenotomining.org/declaration-women-stand-ground-big-coa/>.

According to Naomi Klein, although many unions and social movements fight for social economic justice and against many forms of class oppression and dominance, they still demand and defend “dirty” coal mining jobs or call for “progressive support for government intervention in the market.”<sup>132</sup> Klein argues that those on the left reinforce extractivism for industrialisation despite “voices ... that identified the parallels between economic model’s abuse of the natural world and its abuse of human beings.”<sup>133</sup> Here she mentions Karl Marx’s work, on the “natural laws of life itself.”<sup>134</sup> She further notes that “feminist scholars have long recognised that patriarchy’s war against women’s bodies and against the body of the earth were connected to the essential, corrosive separation between mind and body – and between body and earth – from which both the Scientific Revolution and Industrial Revolution sprang.”<sup>135</sup>

#### **4.9.3 No more coal mining**

Where coal has been extracted for many years and the effects of environmental ill-health are visible, both in water and air pollution or through disease, communities in KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga say “no more mining.” Unions, government and business alike are challenged by this call given that “[m]ining is one of South Africa’s biggest industries. The country is one of the world’s biggest coal producers, and a leading producer of a wide range of metals.”<sup>136</sup> These mine-affected communities want to put an end to coal mining both in their own and in neighbouring areas. Mining-affected communities seek “legal protection to areas in which mining would be too harmful,” and specifically wish to “giv[e] priority to strategic water source areas.”<sup>137</sup>

Recently, Mining-Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) and the Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa (MEJCON-

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<sup>132</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 178.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 177. Also see the discussion in Chapter 2 with regards to Merchant’s work. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 61–115, is also important in this regard.

<sup>136</sup> Centre for Environmental Rights, Centre for Applied Legal Studies, GroundWork, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Highveld Environmental Justice Network and Earthjustice, “The Threats to Human Rights from mining and coal-fired power production in South Africa” (Joint Stakeholders’ Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodical Review 27th Session, October 5, 2016), 2.

<sup>137</sup> Centre for Environmental Rights, “Written Submissions To The South African Human Rights Commission For The National Investigative Hearing On The Underlying Socio-Economic Challenges In Mining-Affected Communities In South Africa,” accessed at October 2016, <http://cer.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CER-Submission-to-SAHRC-on-Mining-Affected-Communities.pdf>.

SA) with the Legal Resources Centre, the Bench Marks Foundation, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, and the Centre for Environmental Rights, made extensive submissions to the South African Human Rights Commission's National Investigative Hearing on the underlying socio-economic challenges in mining-affected communities in South Africa.<sup>138</sup> The numerous accounts by mine-affected communities make it clear that they do not benefit from the mining. They show that those who are paid to work in the mines or subsidise the mine – the social reproduction work in the nearby communities or from the sending areas – carry the effects of mining-for-capitalist development. The picture they paint is bleak. The costs are borne by miners, members of mining communities' health and surrounding ecosystems.<sup>139</sup>

According to a South African NGOs Joint Stakeholder Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodical Review 27<sup>th</sup> Session “[m]ining causes substantial environmental and social harm in South Africa. It depletes water supplies, pollutes the air, soil and water, and destroys ecosystems. Mining also destroys arable land, leading to a decline in food security.”<sup>140</sup> This comprehensive submission affirms the preliminary findings of the Permanent People's Tribunal on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa in August 2016.<sup>141</sup> The submission furthermore states that “[t]he environmental and human damage done by mining and by burning coal violates the human rights of hundreds of communities across South Africa.”<sup>142</sup> Struggles being waged by these mining-affected communities call for “NO mining” and demand immediate improvements of regulations and standards, as well as mitigation mechanisms. The submission urges

the Human Rights Council to recommend that South Africa take immediate steps to protect the rights of mining-affected communities, including ... guaranteeing access to information and meaningful public participation in decision-making concerning mining approvals and regulation; effectively enforcing environmental laws relevant to mining, and providing an effective process to challenge proposed mines.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> MACUA consists of 100 communities and 171 organisations.

<sup>139</sup> For a recent study on the devastating effects of coal mining see David Hallows and Victor Munnik, “The Destruction of the Highveld Part 1: Digging Coal” (Pietermaritzburg: GroundWork, 2016), accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.groundwork.org.za/reports/gWReport%202016.pdf>.

<sup>140</sup> Centre for Environmental Rights et al., “The Threats to Human Rights,” 2.

<sup>141</sup> AIDC, “Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa.”

<sup>142</sup> Centre for Environmental Rights et al., “The Threats to Human Rights,” 2.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 3.



They recommend that additional steps require “coal-fired power plants to comply with domestic emissions standards; and protecting advocates for community and environmental protection from harassment and violence.”<sup>144</sup> The submission further demands that such steps should be taken as mining “cause[s] substantial harm to the environment on which communities depend.”<sup>145</sup>

When reading the submission, one can see clearly the human rights injustices and violations. Making these visible is necessary but it is equally necessary to bring to the fore the type of social relations that exist. It is important to identify who is violating whom, how lack of regulations permit this and the extent of the impunity. But critically rethinking the mining-for-capitalist-development paradigm is essential. This involves ecological-social thinking. How do we live better with one another and nature? It asks us to consider metal-waste recovery and recycling. It asks us to use and rely on less. It requires us to live simply. It asks us to question how industrialised countries and national local elites drain resources. It asks us to live in community within the ecological constraints and with each other. It asks us to evaluate if ecological-social living is possible within a highly commodified society, where all social relations are market exchange relations.

If we apply human rights standards to mining, with its many facets, would the exploitation of nature – human and non-human – end? The human rights approach, perhaps without intending to, does not make fully expose the mining-for-capitalist-development paradigm, which is inherently mining-for-profits-and-destruction. This prioritises mining-for-want over mining-for-need – these approaches are driven by two fundamentally distinct worldviews. The one requires and depends on the separation of nature and society and renders nature as a passive object.<sup>146</sup> The other seeks ecological-social relations where relations are defined outside economic market relations.

The human rights violations surrounding mining and coal-fired power in South Africa is dire. Over the past few years there has been growing solidarity between communities. Recently campaigns and mobilisations have emerged around

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>146</sup> See Merchant for a full account, but for an overview of her analysis refer to Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Just Transitions and Life After Coal.<sup>147</sup> This, however, still remains in enclaves and pockets but is slowly growing in momentum and in the public arena. The campaigns focus predominantly on human rights and the indignity and tragedy of the fallout of mining, loss of life and assassination. It is not always clear if those in solidarity share the same views of the community who see mining-for-capitalist-development as fundamentally flawed.

In the most recent report by GroundWork, they point out the flaws of mining as well as any promise of sustainable mining. They caution strongly against proposing that sustainable mining is possible. The report highlights that

[c]ommunities are rising against coal. There are many spontaneous outbursts against existing mines with communities locking mine gates and refusing them the right to continue mining. The rebellions against mining in Arbor, in Carolina and in Belfast are not isolated instances. In the words of a song often heard at meetings of HEJN [Highveld Environmental Justice Network]: “asifune agenda ya macapitalist” (we don’t want the capitalists’ agenda).<sup>148</sup>

#### ***4.9.4 Interconnectedness of the destruction of mineral extraction and the exploitation of work***

Many emancipatory projects have often neglected discussions about nature, women, race and sexuality. Instead, they have focused on economic exploitation, production and the working class as a homogenous group. This, however, should not be seen necessarily as inadequacies of an emancipatory project per se, but rather as reflective of the ideas, context, period, positionality and preoccupation of the specific struggles at hand. The current ecological crisis affords us an important moment to expand the emancipatory project and re-evaluate, enhance and change demands as well as deepen new questions and connections. In this regard, it is important to take into account Acosta’s argument that “[w]hile greater state control of these extractivist activities is important, it is not sufficient ... When all is said and done, neoextractivism maintains and reproduces key elements of the extractivism that dates back to colonial times.”<sup>149</sup>

According to Samantha Hargreaves, a “post-extractivist future will need to do away with processes and practices that involve the exploitation, appropriation and

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<sup>147</sup> Hallowes and Munnik, “The Destruction of the Highveld,” 195–196. Also see John Karl Filitz, “Mining for Development? A Socio-ecological Study on the Witbank coalfield,” (MA thesis, UKZN, 2011).

<sup>148</sup> Hallowes and Munnik, “Destruction of the Highveld,” 195.

<sup>149</sup> Acosta, “Extractivism and Neoextractivism,” 73.

commercialisation of nature.”<sup>150</sup> She argues that this future “does not preclude the extractivism of natural resources.”<sup>151</sup> Instead it “presses for a different orientation—for extractivism that is considered ‘indispensable’ to be decided by local and regional interests (as opposed to global corporations).”<sup>152</sup> Specifically, she says that there ought to be “a preference for low-intensity and smaller-scale projects ...for decisions to be informed by a desire to preserve ecosystems and reduce carbon emissions, and community participation and social control/ownership.”<sup>153</sup>

In addressing the concerns raised by unions as well as other progressives about job losses in the mining sector, it is essential to make the illusions and deceptions visible to begin to construct elements towards an alternative.<sup>154</sup> How do we bring to the fore the interconnection between extraction of minerals and the exploitation of workers? In other words, how do we begin to see that ownership and control over nature, both human and non-human, is part of the same mode of production?

One way, is to ask first and foremost: could we mine based on a logic of sufficiency, instead of a logic of efficiency?<sup>155</sup> Secondly, bring an end to the deceit that mineral extraction is the only path to development. Thirdly, demystify the notion that mineral extraction is an intrinsic right, and finally, develop alternatives and practices which strengthen a “just transition.”<sup>156</sup>

Many progressives, Klein argues, are “born and raised inside the system, [and] though we may well see the dead-end flaws of its central logic, it can remain intensely difficult to see a way out.”<sup>157</sup> “And how could it be otherwise?” she adds, given that “post-enlightenment Western culture does not offer a road map for how to live that is

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<sup>150</sup> Hargreaves, “Extractivism, its Deadly Impacts,” 153.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> National Union of Metalworkers South Africa, “NUMSA Special National Congress” (presented at the NUMSA special national congress, Johannesburg, December 17–20, 2013), 2. NUMSA raises grave concerns about job losses and deindustrialisation. The union has adopted a climate change strategy. They argue that it is necessary to “link our struggles around climate change with global anti-capitalist struggles.” They argue that “[a] just transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient economy is required.” For a detailed discussion refer to the NUMSA “Climate Change and Class Struggle” resolution; also Vishwas Satgar, “A Trade Union Approach to Climate Justice: The Campaign Strategy of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa,” *Global Labour Journal* 6 (2015): 267; Zione Ruth Manjawira, “South African Labour’s Response to the Challenges of Green Jobs: A Case Study of COSATU and NUMSA” (MA research report, University of Witwatersrand, 2015), accessed October 4, 2016, <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/19629/Ruth%20Manjawira.pdf?sequence=1>.

<sup>155</sup> See discussion in Chapter 2 on Princen.

<sup>156</sup> Just transition refers to a low-carbon and climate resilient economy. See AIDC, “Challenging the State: Renewable Energy Opportunities and Electricity in South Africa in 2015,” for alternatives to fossil fuels, <http://aidc.org.za/download/climate-change/04REnergySAlowlogo.pdf>.

<sup>157</sup> Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 178.

not based on an extractivist, nonreciprocal relationship with nature.”<sup>158</sup> Perhaps this is so, but the works of Merchant help us to see that this non-reciprocal relationship with nature is historically produced—in other words, not inevitable. Her works shows us exactly how the domination over nature and women occurs, as a result of a very specific set of interrelated ideas and practices.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, the work of Princen offers us a road map out of the dead-end, drawing on historical ideas of the logic of sufficiency. Moreover, we are able to draw on both the historical work on Western culture before the seventeenth century, the “enclosures” and the separation between society and nature, as well as other non-Western traditions.<sup>160</sup>

#### **4.10 Women’s solidarity against the traumas of mining**

In 2011, at the COP17 process in Durban, Southern African women from mining-affected communities, rural communities and groups organised around environmental issues came together under the unifying banner of the Southern Africa Rural Women’s Assembly. They made a call to end mining, specifically coal mining.<sup>161</sup> They argued that mining is destructive, causes pollution, creates ill health and dispossesses women of their land and livelihoods. These women did not call for jobs but rather an end to destructive processes that prevent them from creating and maintaining sustainable livelihoods.<sup>162</sup> They demanded land and water. They demanded an end to GMOs, monocropping and pesticides. They also demanded an end to land and ocean grabs for mining and agro-fuels.<sup>163</sup>

These rural and landless women have been consistent in their demands about and analysis of the destructive nature of mining, the impact of climate change on their livelihoods and the need to imagine a different society - one in which both women and nature are freed. They organise and build solidarity between their communities and shared struggles. Many of their struggles are around making women’s work

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> See Merchant in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 1–40; 127–147.

<sup>160</sup> See Princen in Chapter 2 as well as Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency*, and Princen, *Treading Softly*.

<sup>161</sup> The Rural Women’s Assembly was launched in 2009 and is a rural women’s movement of small-scale farmers, producers, farm workers, farm dwellers, fishers and the landless. Their launch slogan was “We are the guardians of land, life, seed and love.” For a recent account of their demands, see Rural Women’s Assembly Annual Report 2015, 14. The 2015 Declarations outlines the origins of the “No to coal!” demand from COP17, 2011.

“Declaration: Women stand their ground against big coal, 19–24 January 2015,” accessed at <http://londonminingnetwork.org/2015/01/african-women-say-no-to-coal/>.

<sup>162</sup> Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, “Rural Women’s Assembly of the Southern African Statement to COP17 Leaders,” accessed March 2, 2014, <http://ggjalliance.org/node/897>.

<sup>163</sup> Rural Women’s Assembly, “Resolutions of the Southern African Rural Women’s Assembly 4 December 2011,” accessed March 3, 2014, <https://ruralwomensassembly.wordpress.com/events/cop17/resolutions/>.

visible, fighting to be heard and organising resistance against the tribal authorities, ward councils, government, mining companies, seed companies, commercial farmers and so on. A key demand is land for livelihood and food sovereignty. They make ecological and gender justice central processes to building an emancipatory project. The seeds of an eco-feminist critique are being watered and nurtured; with each act of solidarity they develop and deepen their analysis.<sup>164</sup> They do not have a blueprint of “the alternative” and correctly do not see this as a necessity, but as they struggle for their freedom, they are building the road of alternatives and simultaneously working to free nature and humanity.<sup>165</sup>

Perhaps because they are rural and working class women, and seen as vulnerable and marginal, many of their critical calls are drowned out by the dominant civil society donor agencies, environmental organisations and university-led research institutes. Much can be learnt from these groups of powerful women who directly bear the brunt of climate change injustice and the multipronged consequences of the ecological crisis. Their struggles bring to the fore the illusions and false claims of sustainable extractivism.<sup>166</sup> They give first-hand accounts of the disharmony between the social, economic and environment consequences that are created by a mining-for-development paradigm, and they provide alternatives for society.<sup>167</sup>

To a large extent, the various COP processes demonstrate that there is no genuine plan to roll back carbon emission and attempt to decrease rising temperatures on the planet, by the state or by industry. The RWA, WoMin, Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) and MACAU among others, challenge the deceit and the untruths of the national and global propaganda. Many of the women confront daily the consequences of drought and high temperatures – their livelihoods as small-scale farmers are directly under threat. They tell of state officials and mining companies

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<sup>164</sup> See the Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA), Feminist School 2014 Report; Rural Women’s Assembly, Feminist School 2016 Report.

<sup>165</sup> At the recent SADC heads of state meeting in Swaziland 2016 there was an alternative parallel space. It mirrors aspects of a world social forum with different themes and organisations running discussions and workshops. On all the days, the RWA tent was spilling over. Women self-organised seed exchanges, reported back from the feminist school, had a discussion about mining companies and water pollution, etc., held discussions about tribal authorities and government forcing women to leave their land for new mines, and debated marriage and land tenure rights.

<sup>166</sup> The work being done by the African network WoMin is powerful. They are a feminist alliance working on gender and extractives, launched in 2013. Among other things they build national and regional solidarity, movement building and alternatives. See details of their work on <http://womin.org.za/>.

<sup>167</sup> The recent Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal on transnational corporations in Southern Africa bore witness to testimonies of the acts of impunity by corporate power. See the PPT jurors report, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://aidc.org.za/permanent-peoples-tribunal-jurors-report/>.

around them doing business as usual.<sup>168</sup> Rural and urban working class women, especially those in mining-affected communities increasingly carry a heavier burden as the social, economic, ecological, racial, gendered, bodied, sexual and hetero-normative inequalities widen and persist in South Africa.

The very act of extraction is an act of alienation and objectification. If this extraction is central to the process of making metals and minerals objects, then the act of mining as waged work is paramount to embedding and reinforcing metals and minerals as “things”. Mining as wage-work is therefore instrumental to alienation and the deceit of jobs through mining. This wage-work occurs presumably at the point of production. It is by exploiting the waged worker that profits are made, or so we are told. But are his wages enough to reproduce himself and the household he is part of? Is the profit only due to the exploitation of the mineworker at the point of production?

This wage he uses to buy other things to survive: food, clothes, shelter, airtime, beer, education for his kids, transport to get to work, etc. But this wage is not enough to buy all the goods and services that he requires to live and fully reproduce himself – making food, washing clothes, or cleaning the place where he sleeps - let alone enough to fulfil his obligations towards his sending area, such as caring for his children, tending to the fields, repairing the hut, looking after his parents and extended family and so on. These goods and services are made invisible, bundled off into obligations and made the responsibility of women. The social reproductive work is done and fully subsidised by women and children. It is not paid for by the wage.

The social reproduction work, done mainly by women beyond the gateways of the mining company – in the community and home – predominately unpaid, unacknowledged and invisible, is a key aspect of work in mining-affected communities.<sup>169</sup> This work is understood as the work that “town women or country wives” do to “take care of their families.”<sup>170</sup> It is their supposed “duty” and role as

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<sup>168</sup> AIDC, “Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal on Transnational Corporations in Southern Africa,” 5–8.

<sup>169</sup> Social reproduction is the work done to sustain and make life. It is the work done to remake ourselves and others daily. It is often referred to as the work done in the domestic sphere and in the home – the cooking, cleaning, feeding, mending, healing, caring, nursing, birthing, etc.

<sup>170</sup> Asanda Benya, “The Invisible Hands: Women in Marikana,” *Review of African Political Economy* 146 (2015): 547, accessed August, 2016, doi:10.1080/03056244.2015.1087394. Benya gives an accurate and detailed account of the dynamics that transpired in Marikana during and after the massacre. The solidarity work and conversations between the Rita Edwards Collective (REC), a feminist collective in the Western Cape, and the women from Marikana – after the massacre period, during the five-month strike in 2013 in particular, as well as during the commission – brought alive the extent to which the social reproduction work done by the women was the bedrock of the mining system. During the solidarity action with the miners but in particular with the women in the mine-affected communities, over the period from 2012–2014, social reproduction as a key component was drowned out

mother, wife, sister, girlfriend, girl-child etc., to care. Over time, this division of labour has become naturalised and expected. More dangerously, it is referred to “as a labour of love.”<sup>171</sup> It is unpaid work and done for men. The work of Federici shows that we need to “expand the Marxian analysis of unwaged labor beyond the confines of the factory and, therefore, to see the home and housework as the foundation of the factory system, rather than its ‘other.’”<sup>172</sup>

Alternatives to extractivism need to include the reconceptualisation of work and associated valued work: who defines what work matters and should be paid? Specifically, it requires notions of purposeful and meaningful work, which does not alienate and objectify but instead reconnects people and their labour to nature and to one another. It is necessary to move beyond normalising the kinds of wage-labour in mining that have been historically only fit for “a prisoner of war, a criminal or a slave.”<sup>173</sup> As argued by Amaranta Herrero and Louis Lemkow, it is necessary to point out the “environmentally blind discourse” which creates “the idealization of the miner.”<sup>174</sup>

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by the unions. In the REC, this kick-started a process of discussion about women’s demands around reproductive work. What would happen, and what sort of solidarity could be called upon, if the women of Marikana demanded a living wage for the social reproductive work they did? This conversation and analysis continues within the organisation and is an important political process.

<sup>171</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2012), 16.

<sup>172</sup> Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, 6–7. Also see Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 61–75.

<sup>173</sup> Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 67.

<sup>174</sup> Amaranta Herrero and Louis Lemkow, “Environmentally Blind Discourses on Coal Extraction and the Idealization of the Miner in Spain,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* (2015): 215.

## **Chapter Five: Fishing – Turning Communities into Factories**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that fish are under threat, as many fish stocks are depleted and overexploited. It shows that the state goes to great lengths to have control over fish stocks, and dominates the marine commons through its policies. Yet the very nature of fish makes for a somewhat different relationship than that which humans have with land or minerals and metals. Unlike land or mineral and metals, fish is food. The mobility of fish as well as human beings' dependence on the ability of fish to reproduce, makes control over fish different.

The historical governance of ocean resources by coastal communities and small-scale fishers was undermined and replaced to favour modern practices. Today in South Africa, we bear witness to the far-reaching effects of the interrelated dynamics of shifting political and economic interests, the consequences of the Scientific Revolution and its conception of nature and industrialisation, as well as the commodification of fish and technological advancement, on fish and the marine commons.

What fish were and are today is discussed in this chapter. The chapter argues that fish as nature, life, food and community has become transformed over time into a commodity and object due to the changing conception of nature.

### **5.2 Transforming the fishing commons**

The ocean makes up over two thirds of the earth's surface and is integral to the health of the entire ecological system. Marine life and fish in particular, play a significant role in sustaining human life. Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* shows how we are connected to the sea and fish and to this day "[carry] in our veins a salty stream in which the elements sodium, potassium and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as in sea water."<sup>1</sup> Carson's account of how "the lands rose and [as] the seas receded a strange fish-like creature emerged on the land" and "the stream of life poured on. New forms evolved, some old ones declined and disappeared," is

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<sup>1</sup> Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 7.



suggestive of our intimate and ancient relationship with the sea, and fish in particular.<sup>2</sup>

For millions, this relationship is under constant threat. Fish and land, unlike minerals and metals, are central parts of South African coastal communities' cultural and social history. The transformation of the conception of fish is "closely entwined with the history of land occupation, use and control" but has a different history than that of minerals and metals in South Africa although it is tied up in the mineral revolution and the process of industrialisation of the country.<sup>3</sup>

Carson puts forward that "in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, under the stimulus of fierce competition for the wealth of the East Indies, the finest charts were prepared by private enterprise. The East India companies employed their own hydrographers, prepared secret atlases, and generally guarded their knowledge of the sailing passages to the East as one of the most precious secrets of their trade."<sup>4</sup> In this passage we see how the command and control over ocean routes was critical to imperial expansion. The expansion was tied to an emerging mechanistic view of nature, which today is dominant.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the imperial expansion that started in the seventeenth century, fishing in South Africa gradually transformed and altered as it became commercial and industrial. Commodification of fish has placed pressure on coastal communities to alter how they relate to fish and the marine commons. Where commercialisation of fishing occurred on the West Coast, for example, factories quickly arose. As a result many of the fishing communities that made their livelihood and ensured their independence from the colonial authorities through fishing were excluded from the ocean and forced into factories.

### **5.3 Fishing historically**

For communities living alongside coasts and rivers, fishing has inevitably been part of community livelihoods, food sovereignty and a way of life for centuries. Historically, coastal and ocean commons were shared, formed an essential part of communal life

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<sup>2</sup> Carson, *Sea Around Us*, chapter 1, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Jackie Sunde, "Customary Governance and Expressions of Living Customary Law at Dwesa-Cwebe: Contributions to Small scale Fisheries Governance in South Africa" (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 2014), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, *Sea Around Us*, chapter 14, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 227 – 35; Monica Chilese, "Neither fish, nor fishermen," in *Our Mother Ocean: Enclosure, Commons, and the Global Fisherman's Movement*, ed. M Dalla Costa and M Chilese (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2014), 59.

and were central to community governance. Marine commons were seen as part of a collective heritage to be cared for and revered. These commons were essential to the cultural, social and political systems of the community. Yet, as illustrated through Merchant's work discussed in Chapter 1, we come to understand that during the seventeenth century the balance between livelihoods, food sovereignty and ecology began to shift with the emergence of enclosures, industrialisation and modern economic life.

Rögnvaldur Hannesson argues that “the oceans are, or were, the last commons. No single state used to have jurisdiction at sea outside a narrow belt, which as late as the middle of the twentieth century was only 3 nautical miles wide.”<sup>6</sup> Communities at the waterside, who were regulated by communal rights and collective needs, came under pressure due to commercial fishing practices. Where once a society had most likely been governed by respect for the oceans, its cosmology and gods, these beliefs became ridiculed.<sup>7</sup> Rule by the tide, moon and the community was slowly replaced by a different worldview, today considered as modern. Historically, fishing had a social component and was considered an all-encompassing activity for those living near rivers and oceans. It was part of a cultural way of living and identity for communities who sustained their existence alongside these coasts.<sup>8</sup>

With the process of industrialisation, with its changed social relations and in particular new technology such as cold storage, fishnets and eventually radar detection, the scale of fishing changed.<sup>9</sup> Little fishing boats and line fishing gave way to the predominance of huge privately owned trawlers. Fishing gradually changed from subsistence and small-scale to industrial and commercial. Another major shift occurred: where once fishers cast their lines in the early morning or paddled out on small boats in collectives, they became labourers on trawlers. The large-scale and global exploitation of marine resources became possible with deep-sea fishing. The scale, depth and extent of what could be caught altered dramatically. These

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<sup>6</sup> Rögnvaldur Hannesson, *The Privatisation of the Oceans* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Chilese gives an account of the respect and fear of the ocean in Dalla Costa and Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean*, 7-20.

<sup>8</sup> See Mariarosa Dalla Costa account of “fish patrimony” which “for thousands of years has guaranteed a livelihood to human settlements,” 3. Also see Sunde, “Customary Governance,” in which she offers an overview of coastal communities historical relationship with rivers and oceans.

<sup>9</sup> See Dalla Costa and Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean*, 29 – 30. Also see Lance van Sittert, “The Fire and the Eye: Fishers Knowledge, Echo-sounding and the Invention of the Skipper in St. Helena Bay Pelagic Fisheries ca. 1930 - 1960,” *Marine Policy* 60 (2015) 300-308.

technologies transformed fishing communities and the oceans. The customary curing and drying of fish altered. Using trawlers meant that fish could be bought frozen, vacuum packed and canned.

With colonialism, industrialisation and modernisation, fish as in the case of land, came to be seen as a natural resource to be harvested and exploited for economic gain, separating it from its social and historical embeddedness in the community. With these changes unfolding in fisheries, concerns were raised in the 1960s with regard to the governance, regulation and management of the ocean commons. To this day, Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" has a firm influence over the approach to ocean commons.<sup>10</sup> Hardin, as outlined in detail in Chapter 2, argued that the ruin of the commons was as a result of "open access" and that "the oceans of the world continue to suffer from the survival of the philosophy of the commons."<sup>11</sup> This orthodox economic logic fostered the conception of fish mainly as an economic good and commodity.

Today, fish is bought as industrial raw material, protein feed for animals, a commodity share as well as a product prepared—fresh, frozen, smoked and cured—for export to foreign markets. The commodification of fish and the expansion of commercial fisheries drove overfishing, overexploitation and consequent depletion of fish stocks in the seas.<sup>12</sup> As these processes unfolded and took hold, limited consideration of the consequences was accounted for, as the processes occurred within a framework driven by a belief that the economic good, as defined by corporate profit, was the answer for society.

These processes and the transformed conception of fish make the consequences of commercial fishing, stock depletion and the new scale of human consumption of fish less obvious. Likewise, changes to small coastal fishing communities were ignored and these communities passed off as outdated and traditional. In contrast, commercial fishing was modern, scientific and represented progress.

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<sup>10</sup> Merle Sowman, Jackie Sunde, Serge Raemaekers, Oliver Schultz, "Fishing for Equality: Policy for Poverty Alleviation for South Africa's Small-scale Fisheries," *Marine Policy*, 46 (2014): 32; Lance van Sittert, "The tyranny of the past: why local histories matter in the South African fisheries," *Ocean & Coastal Management* 46 (2003): 200. Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, "Resist Corporate Capture: Build Sustainable Fisheries for the People," Proceedings of the International Conference on Fishing and Globalisation, 19-21 September 2012 (Philippines: IBON International, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons," 1243 - 1248.

<sup>12</sup> Chilese, "Impoverishment of Marine Fauna," in Dalla Costa and Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean*, 29 - 49.

## 5.4 Fishing in South Africa

In South Africa, fishing activities predate the colonial period. The Khoisan used tidal pools to catch fish and shellfish on the eastern coast and the well-known “strandlopers” (roughly translated as “beach combers”) lived off coastal harvests prior to the arrival of the Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> Settler diaries document instances of strandlopers using lines and spears to fish.<sup>14</sup> Fishing communities on the West Coast of the Cape were established by the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> These fisher folk used small boats in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to live off the sea and through fishing maintained a significant measure of independence from colonial rule.<sup>16</sup> Jackie Sunde notes that fishing was “one of the few options available to freed slaves following the emancipation of slavery.”<sup>17</sup>

Sunde, drawing on the works of van Sittert, Dennis and Williams, argues that “archival research and oral histories indicate that these small-scale fishing communities in the Western Cape evolved distinctive customary fishing practices and associated cultural identities.”<sup>18</sup> Sunde’s study argues that along the Eastern Cape coast, there was and is alternative governance of the coast and marine life. She contrasts colonial and Western governance of fisheries and the ocean to indigenous governance, showing how in the Cape, “where the local fishers became subject to the reach of the various colonial authorities as early as 1652, the majority of the coastal dwellers along the eastern seaboard of the country continued to access and use marine resources in accordance with African customary systems.”<sup>19</sup> Drawing on the work of Hammond-Tooke and Hunter, Sunde argues that “although primarily herders and pastoralists, there is evidence that the tribes that settled in the coastal region ... have used marine resources for a range of uses as far back as living memory extends.”<sup>20</sup>

For two centuries after colonial arrival, subsistence and small-scale fishers

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<sup>13</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 82.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>16</sup> Lance van Sittert, “Labour, Capital and the State in the St Helena Bay Fisheries C. 1856–C.1956” (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 1992): xxii – xxiii.

<sup>17</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 83. Drawing on van Sittert 1994; Sunde 2003; Dennis 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Sunde draws S Williams, “Beyond rights: developing a conceptual framework for understanding access to coastal resources at Ebenhaeser and Covie, Western Cape, South Africa” (PhD diss. University of Cape Town, 2013).

Town.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Sunde draws on Hammond-Tooke, *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).

beyond the reach of the colonial administration continued to relate to nature (specifically forests and fish) as they had before.<sup>21</sup> According to Sunde, from the 1930s, “the State embarked on a determined path towards shifting the locus of governance firmly in its favour. In terms of the Sea Shore Act of 1935, the authority to manage fisheries shifted from the provinces to the State, thus attempting to gain a measure of control over the lucrative and rapidly expanding commercial fishing sector, located along the Western seaboard.”<sup>22</sup> As a result of these regulations, van Sittert argues that subsistence and artisanal fishers were forced into commercial industrial fisheries.<sup>23</sup>

Sunde argues that although the abovementioned regulations “placed increasing restrictions on subsistence and artisanal fishers and brought them under the control of the industrial sector, steadily eroding the customary access and use rights of local fishers,” these regulations did not have much bearing on the Eastern Cape.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Sunde argues, during apartheid areas outside the designated Marine Protected Areas (MPA) remained unaffected by colonial and apartheid marine regulations, such that “in the Eastern Cape the local fisheries beyond the borders of the marine reserves remained relatively uncommercialised and did not attract the attention of policy makers and law enforcement.”<sup>25</sup>

The historical dominance of state-supported commercial fisheries meant that small-scale fishers have fought to be recognised in the new dispensation.<sup>26</sup> Due to resistance and organisation over the past twenty years, subsistence and small-scale fishers are now legally recognised in marine policy.<sup>27</sup> The work of Sunde and Isaacs brings to light the extent to which government stalled and frustrated small-scale fishers, but also how NGOs drew on both a human rights-based framework as well as customary law to affirm and secure the rights of fisher folk in post-apartheid South Africa.

According to Sunde,

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<sup>21</sup> van Sittert and Sunde’s research suggests this.

<sup>22</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 84.

<sup>23</sup> Lance van Sittert, “The Tyranny of the Past: Why Local Histories Matter in the South African Fisheries,” *Ocean & Coastal Management* 46 (2003): 203–205.

<sup>24</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 86–87.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>26</sup> Moenieba Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Reform: Expectations, Hopes and Dreams of ‘A Better Life for All,’” *Marine Policy*, 30 (2006): 51, 54; Sunde, “Customary Governance,” Masifundise Development Trust @ <http://masifundise.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> This struggle is well documented and regularly discussed by Masifundise, a fisher NGO, as well as the Legal Resource Centre.

at the time that the Policy on Small-scale Fisheries was gazetted in June 2012, communities along the coast in the Northern and Western Cape provinces had begun asserting their customary rights ... notwithstanding the fact that their customary systems of marine resource use and governance had been greatly undermined by the imposition of apartheid management policies over the past 60 years.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear that today and in the past, as pointed out by van Sittert below, South Africa's commercial fisheries are dominant and supported by state institutions and resources.

Lance van Sittert demarcates three distinct discourses within South African fisheries as pre-war, inter-war and post-war.<sup>29</sup> The pre-war period (1890–1918) adopted a colonial discourse focused on securing imperial dominance. It focused both on mapping sea routes and developing marine science to overturn local folk systems. The focus during the inter-war period (1918–1939) was to bureaucratised marine science. At the same time, local white fisheries were encouraged, with a view to industrialisation. State policies were put in place to establish a fishing-for-growth paradigm. This particular process of industrialisation undermined longstanding pre-colonial community-ocean relations as well as traditional subsistence coastal fishing communities and their way of life on the West and East Coast.<sup>30</sup>

The inter-war discourse “posited free market competition as natural and progressive, leading inexorably to a more efficient state of production.”<sup>31</sup> Free market policies caused tight competition between inshore fishers and deep-sea fishers. During this period, according to van Sittert, the Pact government was concerned about impoverished fisherman and poor white-ism. As a result, the State intervened in the fishing industry. As early as the 1930s there were already concerns about overfishing, but attempts to introduce conservation laws were met with “stiff resistance from trawling, crayfish canning and inshore fishing industries.”<sup>32</sup>

The post-war discourse shifted from free market to state support. This was an interventionist approach and the state actively took control of the marine commons.

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<sup>28</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 101.

<sup>29</sup> van Sittert, “‘The Handmaiden of Industry’: Marine Science and Fisheries Development in South Africa 1895–1939,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 26 (1995): 531.

<sup>30</sup> Merle Sowman, “Subsistence and Small-scale Fisheries in South Africa: A Ten-year Review,” *Marine Policy* 30 (2006): 61.

<sup>31</sup> van Sittert, “Handmaiden of Industry,” 547.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 555.

Van Sittert argues that the pre-war marine discourse was “recast [from its] biological model of the marine environment and human-animal interactions in strictly economic terms, as a national resource threatened with destruction by unbridled competition in an industry whose sole aim was to maximize earnings.”<sup>33</sup> To this end, “state intervention to avert a tragedy of the commons” was called upon.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly the State issued rights in line with Hardin’s call to save the commons.<sup>35</sup>

The delineation of the discourses into these three different periods helps us to understand the shifts that took place. Importantly, it also shows us the various political, economic, social and environmental influences that affect how fish has come to be seen by the state. Of equal significance, is to observe that the accompanying forms of indigenous marine governance were ignored, obliterated or denied. Sunde’s work clearly suggests distinctive African customary processes and relationships to fishing and marine commons which predate the colonial period, much like land but unlike minerals and metals. The period after apartheid, as will be outlined below, has taken on distinct but similar features to the apartheid period. Issues pertaining to sustainable development, small-scale fisher rights, feeding the nation and aquaculture will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **5.5 Creating national sea borders**

Historically, “the oceans had long been subject to the freedom-of-the-seas doctrine — a principle put forth in the seventeenth century essentially limiting national rights and jurisdiction over the oceans to a narrow belt of sea surrounding a nation’s coastline.”<sup>36</sup> Oceans were governed for a long time by the idea that “the remainder of the seas was proclaimed to be free to all and belong to none.”<sup>37</sup> This meant that before 1948, international trawlers had unlimited access to South African oceans and fish stocks. These foreign trawlers extracted huge quantities of fish from the deep seas and coastlines of South Africa. The vastness of the oceans surrounding South Africa made it difficult to control and implement measures to police both oceans and shores.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 558.

<sup>36</sup> “The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (A Historical Perspective),” last modified 7 June 2016, [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_historical\\_perspective.htm#Historical\\_Perspective.html](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_historical_perspective.htm#Historical_Perspective.html).

<sup>37</sup> “The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (A Historical Perspective).”

Hannesson explains that from the 1970s onwards, control expanded from 3 to 200 nautical miles wide and national borders in the oceans emerged as a means for “states with rich fisheries off their shores to extend their jurisdiction over these areas and to clear away foreign fleets.”<sup>38</sup> The 200-mile expansion occurred within a context of economic interest in oil and trade routes. The expansion was primarily for economic zones to enforce the dominance of national fleets.

The economic zones emerged after World War II, when US president Truman “proclaimed that resources on and underneath the seabed on the continental shelf of the USA were the property of its government.”<sup>39</sup> The United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) which was held between 1958 and 1982, was driven by a combination of factors. These factors included new technological advances in fishing gear and storage as well as advancement in the whale-fat extraction process. Another was the identification of oil as a key source of energy. This required drilling deep within ocean shelves. A further factor was the emergence of mineral seabed mining.

The most comprehensive marine enclosures were put in place between 1973 and 1982. This was driven by globalisation and neoliberal policies. During the convening of the third UNCLOS, the issues subject to discussion were expanded to include seabed mining, fisheries, pollution, navigation, research and delimitation of the continental shelf. The Law of the Seas concluded with coastal states gaining the 200-mile limit to their ocean borders, thus serving their national interests. The superpowers won access allowing them to navigate the deep seas primarily for security and oil. The developing countries gained the right to develop their seabeds for mining minerals. These legislative gains shed light on the economic and political governance of the marine commons.

UNCLOS was relatively silent about maintaining and safeguarding the ecological well-being of the marine commons after more than 30 years of discussion to secure legal agreements. It reinforced the idea that “open access” was bad for the marine commons. Specific concerns regarding the protection of the marine commons and guarding against fish stock depletion or the decimation of small-scale fisher communities are limited in these laws.

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<sup>38</sup> Hannesson, *Privatisation of the Oceans*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



Today, the demarcation, patrol and protection of the marine commons is institutionalised worldwide. This state of affairs is part of the larger global shift towards national market protection of political and economic interests. Fish and fisheries have undergone major transformations through industrialisation and have become a mega-industry, as will be outlined further in this chapter. The national protection of natural marine fishery resources by states is perceived as critical to national growth and development. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests' (DAFF) 2014 Report on the status of South African marine commons indicates that the industry is worth 6–7 billion rand per annum.

UNCLOS was signed by South Africa in 1997 and forms the basis of the Marine Living Resources Act [No. 18 of 1998] (MLRA) and maritime zones.<sup>40</sup> Part of the UNCLOS agreement obliges coastal states to allow foreign fleets into their seas and economic exclusive zones (EEZ) if they are not able to exploit fully the Total Allocation Catch (TAC).<sup>41</sup> Emma Witbooi problematises this, arguing that “while access agreements generate valuable foreign currency for these coastal states, substantial European Union (EU) subsidisation enables the EU fleets to fish profitably in the coastal states’ waters despite the fact that many of the target species are over-exploited.”<sup>42</sup> The EU trade regimes encourage their constituent countries to exploit the marine commons of developing countries because the EU offers high subsidies to their fleets.

In the case of South Africa, Witbooi argues that “government has been more inclined, in capital- and labour-intensive sectors, to pursue the route of internal restructuring of incumbent rights holders, with a view to ensuring stability in the industry.”<sup>43</sup> This tendency of the South African government makes the balance of transformation and genuine sustainability “under certain circumstances ... irreconcilable.”<sup>44</sup>

## **5.6 Fishing in a global context**

Although fish are mobile, swimming and breeding in specific currents, they are generally found in more or less particular geographical areas. Different fish species

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<sup>40</sup> Emma Witbooi, “Law and Fisheries Reform: Legislative and Policy Developments in South African Fisheries Over the Decade 1994 – 2004,” *Marine Policy* 30 (2006): 31.

<sup>41</sup> Witbooi, “Law and Fisheries,” 31.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

are native to particular regions of the world, making some species more vulnerable to exploitation than others. The cold Benguela Current is nutrient-rich and yields large quantities of wild fish, which are sought-after in overseas markets. The EEZ seek to ensure that national flagged trawlers generate profit for commercial fisheries as well as for the state. The Cape Agulhas area has a particular ecosystem that is ideal for shellfish, abalone and squid, for example, where overexploitation and depletion occur in the service of international export markets. Marine borders secure greater access for exploitation by large-scale national fisheries. The intention is to limit exploitation by foreign vessels. The EEZ does not mitigate the impact of overfishing on the ecosystem but rather aims to allocate rights. Marine borders are an extension of privatising the land, similar to the seventeenth-century land enclosures that enabled the commodification of fish.

According to the WB 2014 Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO), “better management of the goods and services of the oceans” is critical to “ensuring the oceans’ health.”<sup>45</sup> This dominant global framework maintains and fosters a belief that with improved institutional mechanisms and an increase in capital investments (such as national borders, total catch allocations, security of tenure – all in line with UNCLOS) challenges in fishing will be overcome. According to the GPO, its objective is to “reduce the open access nature of fisheries by creating responsible tenure arrangements, including secure access rights for fishers and incentives for them to hold a stake in the health of the fisheries.”<sup>46</sup> In so doing, this partnership argues that it will “contribute hundreds of billions of dollars annually to the global economy,” and will provide “essential environmental services, including climate regulation.”<sup>47</sup>

The WB states that the “GPO will work exclusively to empower local ocean users – the owners of this public resource – to take a long-term stake in the health of those resources and will help them to reap the benefits from them.”<sup>48</sup> Seth Macinko insists that small-scale fishers stay alert and be aware of “any strategically benign rhetoric” such as “rights based fishing,” “the Tragedy of the Commons,” “too many

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<sup>45</sup> Global Partnership for Oceans, “Framework document for the Global Partnership for Oceans 2014.” Last modified May 6, 2016, <http://www.globalpartnershipforoceans.org>.

<sup>46</sup> Global Partnership for Oceans, “Global Partnership for Oceans – A declaration for healthy, productive oceans to help reduce poverty,” 2014, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Global Partnership for Oceans, “Global Partnership for Oceans – A declaration,” 23.

<sup>48</sup> Global Partnership for Oceans, “Framework Document,” 12.

boats chasing too few fish,” “fisheries as investable opportunities,” “using market-based instruments to create incentives,” and “creating incentives to promote stewardship.”<sup>49</sup> According to Macinko, from the outset, the orthodox argument with regard to fishing has been that open access is the problem. To that end, the logic is diagnosis and prescription, and rests on the “premise that private property creates the incentive for wise resource management.”<sup>50</sup> The empirical claim is that “there are no private property rights in fisheries” and therefore “fisheries management is a mess.”<sup>51</sup> This logic concludes that “this situation requires private property.”<sup>52</sup>

Macinko uses the example of Ragnar Arnason’s work to illustrate the logic set out above. Arnason’s diagnosis is that “fisheries, as so many other natural resource extraction activities, are among the economic activities where property rights are poorly defined or even non-existent. This generally results in huge inefficiencies, frequently referred to as the fisheries problem.”<sup>53</sup> According to Macinko, Arnason offers the following as the prescription: “it follows immediately that the fisheries problem would disappear if only the appropriate property rights could be defined, imposed and enforced.”<sup>54</sup> Macinko argues that there is a determined push to privatise the marine commons.

Moenieba Isaacs reminds us of McCay’s argument that “Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) create commodities out of the right to catch wild fish and shellfish, and they bring market forces to the allocative task.”<sup>55</sup> Contextualising this, Isaacs notes that “ITQs were introduced in the late 1980s in South Africa as well as the rest of the world, although they were part of a long history of enclosing the fisheries commons and a process of deepening the role of the market – a response to Hardin’s (1968) tragedy of the commons.”<sup>56</sup>

At different historical moments, freedom of the seas and, later, Hardin’s “tragedy of the commons” were presented as dominant narratives. These dominant

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<sup>49</sup> Seth Macinko, “Has the Leopard Changed its Spots? Some Thoughts on the Challenges Awaiting Small Scale Fisheries” (paper presented at the World Forum of Fisher Peoples 6th General Assembly, 1-5 September 2014, Cape Town, South Africa).

<sup>50</sup> Macinko, “Has the Leopard Changed its Spots?”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Moenieba Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas, Poverty Alleviation and Challenges for Small-country Fisheries Policy in South. Africa,” *MAST* 10, no. 2 (2011): 66, accessed April 23, 2016, [http://www.marecentre.nl/mast/documents/MAST10.2\\_Isaacs.pdf](http://www.marecentre.nl/mast/documents/MAST10.2_Isaacs.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas,” 66.

narratives by “fisheries economists Gordon, Scott and later Arnason” aim to restrict marine access.<sup>57</sup> They were deployed as if fact, and had direct influence on the marine commons and our relationship with it. Isaacs outlines that the “key attributes of this system are privatisation of resources, huge profit margins, maximising efficiency and downscaling.”<sup>58</sup> According to Isaacs it should become clear that specific interests have influenced the dominant narrative.<sup>59</sup> These dominant worldviews render invisible the alternative historical worldviews of community and the marine commons.

Merchant’s historical conception of the tragedy of the commons as well as her analysis of the unfolding processes of science, political, cultural, social and economic ideas of the Scientific Revolution shed light on how the marine commons are conceived of today and the historical roots of this view. The slow transformation of how fish affects and is affected by these societal changes is evident from the depletion of stocks and the poor state of the marine commons. This is clear at both global and national levels. Profit making transforms fish into an object, product and commodity. This transformation makes invisible the embedded historical, cultural and social place of fish within society. Furthermore, it hides the alternatives that can provide new ways of being with fish, fisher communities and fishers beyond what is offered by factories, supermarkets and the economic logic of capital. In the case of South Africa, this transformation in respect of fish was fostered early on by the state, where it prioritised commercial fisheries over small-scale fishing.

## **5.7 The Marine Living Resources Act – conserving to exploit**

The ITQ system was introduced in 1988 with the promulgation of the Sea Fishery Act [No. 12 of 1988]. This system promoted a wealth-based approach to allocate the rights to fish. Isaacs points out that “the rights to exploit marine resources prior to the 1994 elections were concentrated solely in the hands of white-owned commercial enterprises, resulting in legislation which excluded artisanal, subsistence and small-scale fishers.”<sup>60</sup> The post-apartheid expectation was for transformation, redress and inclusion. Unfortunately, the new ANC government maintained the ITQ system and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ragnar Arnason, “Efficient Management of Ocean Fisheries,” *European Economic Review* 35, no. 2-3 (1991): 408-417, cited in Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas,” 66.

<sup>59</sup> Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas,” 66.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 64.

thus reinforced a wealth-based instead of redistributive approach. Isaacs argues that “the new fisheries policy overlooked the progressive intentions put forward in the RDP, in favour of neo-liberal policy prescriptions.”<sup>61</sup> At the same time, as processes of globalisation unfolded, there was global recognition of the need for state stewardship of the environment due to the increasing environmental limits and pressures related to the issue of climate change.<sup>62</sup>

The Marine Living Resources Act [No. 18 of 1998] (MLRA) emerged with competing objectives. One objective is to protect and claim stewardship of marine commons. Another is to exploit the marine commons, presumably to ensure growth and development, within a globalising world. Within this framework, the state has to serve the interests of its citizens, protect the environment for the common good and simultaneously serve the interests of local and multinational capital.

The South African government adopted sustainable development as its approach to balance the environment with economic growth and social transformation. This approach is aligned with Agenda 21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the Kyoto Protocol of 2002. The MLRA states that its aims are to ensure the “long-term sustainable utilisation of marine living resources and the orderly access to exploitation, utilisation and protection of certain marine living resources” and “exercise of control over marine living resources in a fair and equitable manner to the benefit of all the citizens of South Africa.”<sup>63</sup>

Stewardship, according to the MLRA, can be translated in three ways. Firstly, it facilitates an equitable and fair quota system. This implies that the policy needs to ensure that previously historically disadvantaged communities are incorporated into the system. Secondly, the policy must conserve the environment. It seeks to do so through the allocations of ITQ permits, demarcating marine protected areas as well as introducing time-restricted and seasonal fishing zones. Thirdly, the minister, director general, transformation council and control officers must implement the MRLA as well as police and safeguard the marine commons. The MLRA legislates over ITQs and thus primarily echoes Hardin’s conceptual framework of the tragedy of the commons and its management prescription.

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<sup>61</sup> Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas,” 65.

<sup>62</sup> The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development referred to as the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 reflects this.

<sup>63</sup> Republic of South Africa, Marine Living Resources Act [No. 18 of 1998], *Government Gazette* 395, no. 18930 (1998), 2.

We can infer from the MLRA that stewardship is control over the marine commons by the state on behalf of different stakeholders. These stakeholders are not homogenous and have different and competing interests. Dr Kim Prochazka, director of research of the fisheries branch of Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), argues that fisheries science “is not to promote the ‘side’ of fish, but to ensure that fishers are able to catch fish sustainably (and preferably to catch more fish over time).”<sup>64</sup>

The idea that the MLRA is custodian over the marine commons needs to be unpacked. With regards to its stewardship, one has to ask if the ministry takes into account that the various stakeholders do not hold the same and equal power. The concerns of small-scale fishers, fishing communities and marine life and fish in particular, were not of interest before 1994. The recognition of small-scale fisheries was won through organisation and struggle and it took some twenty years to materialise after the new dispensation. Prochazka’s comment above is evidence of the deeply embedded seventeenth-century separation of nature and society conception. The guardianship of fish by the DAFF reflects the prioritisation of an economic logic above fish and the social needs of small-scale fishers or small-scale and coastal communities. When stewardship is framed to ensure economic growth, it serves particular economically driven interests over both nature and society.

The MLRA argues that it seeks to balance the economy, society and environment. This balance is necessary, according to the MLRA, in order to ensure both society’s and nature’s well-being. However, according to the DAFF, “in line with international trends, the department recognises fisheries as an economic activity rather than a purely environmental or biodiversity matter.”<sup>65</sup>

Branch and Clark propose that the MLRA must be seen as a tripod.<sup>66</sup> They argue that each leg represents the important economic, political and scientific spheres of policy. The economic sphere presumably ensures stability in society. This sphere comprises labour, commercial fisheries and related industries. Specifically, it is concerned with the duration and transfer of fishing rights. The political sphere

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<sup>64</sup> Lesley Green, “Fisheries Science, Parliament and Fishers’ Knowledge in South Africa: An Attempt at Scholarly Diplomacy,” *Marine Policy* 60 (2015): 345–352. Dr Prochazka is Director of Research: Fisheries Branch, DAFF.

<sup>65</sup> “Fisheries,” last modified September 17, 2016, <http://www.gov.za/about-SA/fisheries>. Source: SA Yearbook 2013/14.

<sup>66</sup> George M. Branch and Barry M. Clark, “Fish stocks and Their Management: The Changing Face of Fisheries in South Africa,” *Marine Policy*, 30 (2006): 3.

presumably ensures racial equity. Here, reference is to matters pertaining to reallocation, transformation, ownership and co-management. Science presumably ensures sustainability, which is determined by modelling the yield catch effort of fishing, as well as controls and monitoring ecosystems. DAFF argues that the equilibrium needs to prioritise the development needs of society given its apartheid legacy, but no one sphere ought to undermine the centrality of economic growth, which presumably will yield development and prosperity.<sup>67</sup>

The MLRA perspective is to conserve marine resources in order to exploit, so as to ensure economic development and growth. Since 1994 there have been numerous permutations of the economic model, but there is a clear and strong alignment with a global neoliberal paradigm.<sup>68</sup> The trajectory for the commercial fisheries industry is to expand and deepen the sector. It seeks to secure a larger share of the global blue market economy. The DTI aims to grow the fisheries industry into a competitive global exporter. The allure of global markets, foreign earnings and the promise of jobs are key drivers for the state. The neoliberal fisheries approach has met with resistance from organised fishing communities, fishers, unions, progressive NGOs working on trade and social justice issues and environmental organisations.<sup>69</sup>

DAFF conceives of the marine commons as a natural resource and fish as a key commodity in the larger fisheries industry, with various levels of beneficiation. Currently the commercial fisheries industry employs 43 458 people and there are some 40 fishing communities in South Africa whose economic well-being depends on fishing and marine resources.<sup>70</sup> The industry represents 0.5% of the gross domestic product.<sup>71</sup> According to the PLAAS Rural Report in 2015, “a survey in 2000 estimated that there were about 30 000 subsistence fishers and about 28 000 households that depended on harvesting near-shore marine resources. The latest

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<sup>67</sup> See MLRA [No. 18 of 1998].

<sup>68</sup> Bond, *Elite Transition*, 50–52; Marais, *Pushed to the Limit*, 87–93.

<sup>69</sup> “No new round! Turn Around!” Third World Network Declaration signed by numerous African NGOs, Unions, Movements and NGOs including many SA organisations such as FAWU, COSATU, Masifundise, EMG, AIDC, TAC etc., in 1999 in response to South African government’s engagement in the WTO third ministerial round. See Isaacs, “Understanding the Social Processes and the Politics of Implementing a New Fisheries Policy, the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998, in South Africa” (PhD diss., University of the Western Cape, 2003); and Sunde specifically on fisher resistance.

<sup>70</sup> World Wildlife Fund South Africa, “South African Fisheries: The Real Facts and Trends,” last modified November 2, 2011, <http://www.wwf.org.za/?4900/fisheriesfactstrends>.

<sup>71</sup> World Wildlife Fund South Africa, “South African Fisheries.”

estimated total number of small-scale and subsistence fishers in South Africa is about 8 078.”<sup>72</sup>

From recent discussions, there have emerged numerous initiatives to further enhance and facilitate growth in the marine resource sector. Internationally, these are the Blue Ribbon Report on Investment, and the World Bank Global Partnership on Oceans. Locally, “The Home of Engineered Efficiency” presentation shows how government, policy and infrastructure are ready for investment in aquaculture.<sup>73</sup> Both the global and local initiatives seek to conserve, so as to exploit, and are based on the further privatisation of the marine commons.

Another example can be seen in the recent dispute with regard to Marine Protected Areas (MPA). Edna Molewa, the Minister of Environmental Affairs, listed 22 new protected marine areas. The commercial fisheries industry opposed the MPA identified.<sup>74</sup> Francois Kuttel, the CEO of the Oceana Group, “welcomed in principle the MPA” but argued that they must be “applied cautiously to prevent job losses.”<sup>75</sup> Bobby Jordan, a journalist, raised the point that “the move to protect marine biodiversity coincides with another government initiative to open up 150 000 square meters of seabed for mineral exploration.”<sup>76</sup> This illustrates the tensions within existing policy. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Minister, Senzeni Zokwana, “expressed concerns about the effects these areas are likely to have on subsistence fishermen.”<sup>77</sup> Both ministries indirectly reflect the lack of a holistic approach with regard to the marine commons.

The current fisheries model and the new strategies to exploit the marine commons in the name of fishing-for-development and growth, have continued to exacerbate apartheid-era ecological degradation rather than having addressed or stopped it. The experience of bona fide small-scale fishers through the ITQ system of the MLRA has not improved, but has instead deteriorated. Policy that presumably

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<sup>72</sup> Moenieba Isaacs and Mafaniso Hara, “Backing Small-scale Fishers: Opportunities and Challenges in Transforming the Fish Sector,” Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies Rural Status Report 2 (Bellville: PLAAS, June 2015): 7.

<sup>73</sup> East London IDZ, “The Home of Engineered Efficiency,” PowerPoint presentation, 4 October 2012 at Aquaculture Investment & Policy Dialogue, accessed September 28, 2014, [http://www.nda.agric.za/doaDev/sideMenu/fisheries/03\\_areasofwork/Aquaculture/AquacultureInvestmentPolicyDialogue/Generic%20Presentation%20Aquaculture%20\(Aquaculture%20Investment%20&%20Policy%20Dialogue%2004Oct2012\).pdf](http://www.nda.agric.za/doaDev/sideMenu/fisheries/03_areasofwork/Aquaculture/AquacultureInvestmentPolicyDialogue/Generic%20Presentation%20Aquaculture%20(Aquaculture%20Investment%20&%20Policy%20Dialogue%2004Oct2012).pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Bobby Jordan, “Marine Biodiversity Plan will Gaff Fishing Jobs,” *The Sunday Times*, April 17, 2016: 8.

<sup>75</sup> Jordan, “Marine Biodiversity Plan,” 8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



sought to transform the industry, recognise subsistence fishers and grant rights to previously disadvantaged groups, has failed to do so. According to Hara and Raakjer, “the MLRA is the primary vehicle for transformation of the sector. The three primary mechanisms can be distinguished: redistribution of fishing rights, restructuring of ownership and management of fishing enterprises and a revamp of the industry’s grievances in line with the new political order.”<sup>78</sup> Isaacs shows how state capture is rampant in the industry, leaving many bona fide fishers without quotas, livelihoods and food security. She argues that although small-scale fishers are now recognised, the experience of bona fide fishers and others historically linked to fishing is being ignored through BEE processes and quotas.<sup>79</sup>

Reports indicate that stocks are depleting and measures are urgently required to remedy the situation for the marine commons. According to Pitcher and Cheung, global warming, acidifying seas, pollution and reduction in ocean production and biodiversity are some of the many challenges faced by marine organisms.<sup>80</sup> They ask: “we have drawn heavily from our oceans to feed millions [of people], but have we done irreversible harm to the biodiversity of our seas?”<sup>81</sup> This critical question eludes DAFF. Unfortunately, approaches adopted by the various ministries reflect an environmental discourse of sustainable development, which promotes a green economy favouring market-based solutions. A limit of a sustainable development model premised on economic growth as a central pillar conceives of nature mainly as a natural resource for extraction. When such a model is reinforced through a neoliberal macroeconomic policy it further commercialises and privatises nature, thus undermining environmental protection.

The recent Operation Phakisa proposal, which seeks to “[unlock] the economic potential of South Africa’s oceans,” demonstrates this approach in the case of fisheries most aptly.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Mafaniso Hara and Jesper Raakjer, “Policy Evolution in South Africa Fisheries: The Governance of the Sector for Small Pelagics,” *Development Southern Africa* 26 (2009): 652.

<sup>79</sup> Isaacs, “Individual Transferable Quotas, Poverty Alleviation and Challenges for Small-country Fisheries Policy in South. Africa,” *MAST* 10, no. 2 (2011): 67, accessed April 23, 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Tony J. Pitcher and William W.L. Cheung, “Fisheries: Hope or Despair” *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 74 (2013): 506.

<sup>81</sup> Pitcher and Cheung, “Fisheries: Hope or Despair,” 506.

<sup>82</sup> Republic of South Africa, “Operation Phakisa, Unlocking the Economic Potential of South Africa’s Oceans,” Marine Protection Services and Governance Final Lab Report. August 15, 2014.

## 5.8 South Africa's blue economy – problematising the golden mean

Operation Phakisa was initiated in 2012 and spearheaded by the department of environmental affairs. It is a programme aimed at generating R177 billion from the exploitation of the ocean resources.<sup>83</sup> According to Sipho Kings, prior to Operation Phakisa, there was no holistic plan to manage the oceans and various departments held competing interests in overseeing and regulating the oceans.<sup>84</sup> These interests ranged from trade and economic growth, to social development and livelihoods for small-scale fisheries, to water, pollution and environment for the Department of Environmental Affairs, as well as concerns pertaining to marine life and biodiversity.

According to Kings, “renewable ocean resources are already collapsing,” and “there is little leeway for making mistakes.”<sup>85</sup> This is underscored by Nadine Strydom, who notes that “wherever there is pressure to make money off the ocean, we need to make sure we are sensitive to the renewability of resources.”<sup>86</sup> She argues that there are limited resources due to the excessive harvesting.<sup>87</sup> In particular she stresses that “any Phakisa initiative has to be managed to ensure economic decisions are not made instead of environmentally-sound thinking.”<sup>88</sup>

DAFF's approach towards ocean resources in Operation Phakisa is a focus on marine manufacturing, marine transport, offshore oil and gas, marine protection and governance and aquaculture. These areas are part of the state's industrial plan to speed up the use of marine resources for economic growth. Fish and marine life, specifically their renewability and yield, are seen as a means for economic growth, development and racial redress. Kings' article highlights the contradictions between “speeding up” industrialisation of ocean resources and Strydom's warnings about the state of fish stocks. Operation Phakisa makes little mention of small-scale fishermen, fishing communities or their livelihoods. They however seek communities' buy-in for Marine Protected Areas and mention that poachers require alternative avenues for livelihood. Furthermore, they highlight that the government ought to take into account small-scale fisheries policy.

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<sup>83</sup> Sipho Kings, “O, Sea, Can You Save Us?” *Mail & Guardian*, Feb 19–25 2016: 5.

<sup>84</sup> Kings, “O, Sea, Can You Save Us?” 5.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

DAFF sees the economy as the most important factor driving the use of the marine commons. It for this reason, that Operation Phakisa puts forward that the unlocking of the potential of the ocean is critical for economic growth. Accordingly, the objective of Operation Phakisa is to ensure that any and all obstacles are overcome so as to facilitate the development of the marine economy. Operation Phakisa is developed in line with the key objective of the national strategy for sustainable development to create a green economy. Moreover, it was initiated because environmental conservation through the National Environment Management Act (NEMA) [No. 107 of 1998], amended in 2008, and other policies do not “sufficiently enable the ocean economy.”<sup>89</sup> The creation of new jobs as a rationale can be found throughout the promotion of a blue economy. The irony, as highlighted by Isaacs, is that so many jobs and livelihoods have already been destroyed as a result of government BEE allocation to non-bona fide small-scale fishermen. Many of the BEE allocations have gone to new black entrants who have never fished before.

Concurrent to Operation Phakisa, government launched a Green Paper on the National Environmental Management of the Oceans of 2012 (NEMO). According to Jan Glazewski, a better title would be “Green Paper on Ocean Governance,” because “it is arguable that it is not the marine environment that has to be ‘managed’ but rather the people and legal personae who use ocean space and extract its abundant resources that need management.”<sup>90</sup> The NEMO seeks to collect data and develop knowledge for decision-making purposes, so as to ensure better environmental management. According to NEMO it seeks to “maintain ocean environmental integrity.”<sup>91</sup>

Glazewski stresses that the Green Paper is welcome, but

it is not clear what the ultimate objective of this Green Paper is. Is it to improve cooperative governance in the ocean space, to draft new legislation in the form of an ocean governance act, or both? There is a need for a chief agency involved in ocean affairs to play a median role between long-term sustainable economic development and custodianship or stewardship in

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<sup>89</sup> Republic of South Africa, “Operation Phakisa,” 31. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, “National Environmental Management Act,” (Pretoria: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Jan Glazewski, “Ocean Governance: A First Step,” *S Afr J Sci* 109 (2013): 2, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/sajs.2013/a011>.

<sup>91</sup> “Green Paper: The South African Policy on Ocean Environmental Management,” *Government Gazette* 568, no. 35783 (2012): 13-15.

managing South Africa's oceans (we need to find the 'Golden Mean'). In the preamble to the White Paper there is a need to recognise this tension between conservation and exploitation.<sup>92</sup>

Why does this tension exist? Can the tension be overcome? Operation Phakisa identifies preventing the "over-exploitation of resources living and non-living" as its key priority. It then seems to undermine this when it also argues that it must "unlock obstacles for an ocean economy."<sup>93</sup> Unpacking and problematising the Golden Mean is at the heart of an important and necessary conversation about the urgency and seriousness of the ecological crisis in South Africa and the renewability of fish in particular. While recognition of the tension between conservation and exploitation might be regarded as a first step, much more is required for a meaningful engagement and rethink with regards to fish, its renewability, fishing communities and the demands that the ecological crisis places on us as a society.

Racial redress and transformation has not occurred through the ITQ system and the approach adopted by the post-apartheid State has not improved the health of the ocean or fish, the fishing communities or small-scale fisheries. The state acknowledges the overexploitation but thinks it is able to avert further depletion. It thus seeks to avert the crisis by implementing a misguided policy that seeks to unlock the oceans' economy through fish farming, better policing and surveillance, improved governance, scientific knowledge and collation of data. This is the promotion of a green economy, which aims to enhance the tonnage of fish for those who can afford it. This choice deepens the ecological crisis.

## **5.9 Fish – from food source to commodity**

According to DAFF, the "fisheries sector is worth around R6 billion per annum and directly employs some 27 000 people in the commercial sector. Thousands more and their families depend on these resources for food and the basic needs of life."<sup>94</sup> WWF South Africa's Sustainable Seafood Initiative (Sassi) states that "we consume 312 million kilograms of fish each year, with half of that being locally caught. Seventy

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<sup>92</sup> Glazewski, "Ocean Governance," 2.

<sup>93</sup> Government of South Africa, "Operation Phakisa," 28.

<sup>94</sup> "Fisheries," last modified September 17, 2016, <http://www.gov.za/about-SA/fisheries>. Source SA Yearbook 2013/14, <http://www.gov.za/about-SA/fisheries>.

percent of that tonnage is hake and sardines.”<sup>95</sup> Locally and globally, fisheries form a mega industry with reach far beyond feeding bellies and filling plates.

Fish is both caught in the wild and farmed for commercial sale. The scale of fisheries has expanded rapidly and dramatically at both global and local level over the past five to six decades. The extent of the commodification of fish has meant that since the 1980s catches have not increased, and over “the past 10 years, fisheries worldwide have been generally reported as being in an extremely poor state, with almost no improvement in sight.”<sup>96</sup> Overfishing and depletion of spawn stocks is well acknowledged and undisputed.<sup>97</sup>

Fish was not always a commodity. Fish was an integral part of a larger relationship of peoples to the oceans and seas. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Monica Chilese stress that “oceans represent not only food but medicines, raw materials, climate environment, biodiversity and culture.” For them, the “polyvalence of the vital functions that the oceans represent” is not to be overlooked.<sup>98</sup> In South Africa, fish has been a means of sustenance and independence, as well as a way of life and community for those who depended on the ocean.

Evidence suggests that coastal fishing was not part of the modernisation and industrial processes during the early period of agriculture, or later with the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa.<sup>99</sup> The first fishing regulation was issued in 1657 and it prohibited the sale of fish. Interestingly, Jan van Riebeeck allowed “freemen to fish but ‘not for the sake of selling’ in order ‘that agriculture may not suffer.’”<sup>100</sup> Hence agriculture, during this early period, had a monopoly on paid labour.

Sunde argues that a market soon developed on the Cape coast, accompanied by stricter fishing regulation.<sup>101</sup> These developments had little bearing on the fish and peoples existing beyond the direct arm of colonial rule. Those on the Cape coast, however, felt the brunt of these regulations. Isaacs notes that a century later, the “British occupation of the Cape in 1795 lifted the previous strict control on fishing

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<sup>95</sup> WWF South Africa, “The Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative,” accessed September 11, 2016, <http://wwfsassi.co.za/>.

<sup>96</sup> Pitcher and Cheung, “Fisheries: Hope or Despair,” 506.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Dalla Costa and Chilese, *Our Mother Ocean*, 1.

<sup>99</sup> van Sittert, “Handmaiden of Industry,” 532.

<sup>100</sup> Branch and Clark, “Fish Stocks and Their Management,” 3. Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 82.

<sup>101</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance,” 83.

rights, and a commercial fishing industry was opened in 1801 .... After 1856, privatization of the southern shores allowed merchants to control and organize the shipment of dried snoek from South Africa to Mauritius.”<sup>102</sup> Snoek became part of the looting of the spice route journey, and like slaves and other objects, was taken back to Europe.<sup>103</sup> Van Sittert argues that this pre-war period was primarily concerned with securing its imperial sea routes rather than commercial fisheries, hence the fish still remain somewhat “free” and uncommodified.

Van Sittert dislodges the narrative of marine science and commercial fisheries as unified since its conception. He exposes this history as “a convenient myth.”<sup>104</sup> Debunking the myth is important, because van Sittert reminds us of the past in order not to repeat previous fisheries’ regime reforms, which, according to him, are a product of a capitalist system and less about racism per se.<sup>105</sup> The shift from feudalism to capitalism transformed fish as food and sustenance to a commodity for sale.

Sunde’s account of fish as uncommodified, reflects an historical relationship within the community.<sup>106</sup> It shows a very different relationship between the marine commons as nature and the community. Her focus on marine governance seeks to develop contemporary customary law for small-scale fisheries. In doing so, her work brings to the fore an alternative relationship between community and marine commons, which foregrounds a particular cosmology as well as cultural, social and material significance. Simultaneously, the reliance on traditional relationships embedded in the social fabric of fishing communities outside the reach of colonial rule did not dissipate overnight, as reflected also in Isaacs’ work. Elements remain within the informal small-scale fisheries communities on the Cape Coast. Both Sunde’s and Isaacs’ work signals the important role of fish as food within a broader intrinsic web of community and solidarity, livelihood and subsistence. Fish, in many respects, is part of local communities.

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<sup>102</sup> Moenieba Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Governance and Understanding the Snoek (*Thyrsites atun*) Supply Chain in the Ocean View Fishing Community, Western Cape, South Africa,” *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 4 (2013): 17, Accessed March 23, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05863-180417>.

<sup>103</sup> Cape Snoek (*Thyrsites atun*) is a local fish found in the Western Cape.

<sup>104</sup> van Sittert, “Handmaiden of Industry,” 531.

<sup>105</sup> Lance van Sittert, “‘Those Who Cannot Remember the Past are Condemned to Repeat It’: Comparing Fisheries Reforms in South Africa,” *Marine Policy* 26 (2002): 295.

<sup>106</sup> Sunde, “Customary Governance.” 102 – 115.

The rapid industrialisation of mining, as described in Chapter 4, led to migrant compounds and, soon thereafter, mining towns. “Fishing was marginal to an economy built on mining and agriculture” but with time, people in the interior of the country working in and around mines required sources of food that were affordable and nutritional.<sup>107</sup> Fish met this need and as a result, fisheries particularly on the West Coast, developed. This started in earnest after the unification of South Africa in 1910 and later from around 1933, when the state paid particular attention to the fishing sector. During World War II, the need to feed soldiers drove the global demand for canned fish and in particular the harvesting of crayfish, stockfish and later pelagic fish.<sup>108</sup> The mineral-rich West Coast was well stocked and a prime target for inshore and deep-sea fishing. Deep-sea trawling far outstripped and put pressure on in-shore fishers and self-supporting fishers at the time.<sup>109</sup> The extent of this pressure could be seen in fish dumping in order to maintain high prices, making fish prices unaffordable for locals. Here we begin to see how fisheries become profit-driven. Fish as food is transformed into fish as commodity. The primary purpose of feeding society is lost from focus.

Sardines have been canned locally since the 1940s. This has had a significant bearing on the exploitation of fish, such that there was a period of sardine stock depletion. At first, white locals secured the reserved “skilled” jobs in the emerging modern factories. Later, indigenous and coastal artisanal fisher folk and communities were inadvertently forced into factories. This undoubtedly altered the relationship of people settled on the Cape’s coasts with the ocean, fish and land. Today, sardines are the largest volume of fish landed and second to hake in sales, with a total of six canneries in South Africa.<sup>110</sup> According to the WWF, “R4.4 billion [of] fish were landed in 2009 and this is equivalent to 583 000 tonnes of fish. In the impoverished Eastern Cape region, R500 million in foreign revenue is generated in the squid fishery every year; making it one of the country’s most valuable fisheries.”<sup>111</sup>

The commodification of fish as well as the accompanying expansion of fisheries is, however, not unique to South Africa, but in line with the global expansion of

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<sup>107</sup> van Sittert, “Handmaiden of Industry,” 532.

<sup>108</sup> Jacqueline Alder et al., “Forage Fish: From Ecosystems to Markets,” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 33 (2008): 153-166.

<sup>109</sup> van Sittert, “Handmaiden of Industry,” 543.

<sup>110</sup> Hara and Raakjaer, “Policy Evolution in South Africa Fisheries,” 652.

<sup>111</sup> World Wild Fund South Africa, “South African Fisheries.”

fisheries that took place in the 1980s.<sup>112</sup> By the eighties, South Africa was ranked fifteenth out of twenty countries for most depleted fish stock, due to cod-like hake and pelagic exploitation in the South African exclusive economic zones. In the seventies, Namibian stocks, which were under South African control at the time, were depleted. In the sixties, the Cameroon-Angola marine commons were net exporters servicing Northern markets. Today they are net importers in highly undernourished societies.<sup>113</sup>

The work by Isaacs with regard to snoek on the Cape Coast outlines an important counter-narrative of the historical and contemporary role of fish. It traces a transcultural and transcontinental food heritage brought by Indonesian slaves who “considered [snoek] as a delicacy” to its embedded historical socio-cultural-material generational roots within the lives of Cape locals today. Integral to her study is the way in which Isaacs demonstrates the significance of snoek as an important food source for locals.<sup>114</sup> The work is important because it not only holds potential lessons for the significance of small-scale fishers in the community, but also shows how small-scale fishers are excluded from the dominant fisheries policy. Forty per cent of snoek is caught on handlines by small-scale local fisheries for direct informal sale to historically local and poor communities in the Cape.<sup>115</sup>

The study by Isaacs shows the relevance and significance of fish as part of community networks, livelihood and solidarity. Drawing on her study, I argue that for these working class poor communities in the Cape, fish is not frozen, packaged hake bought in the hypermarket, or farmed salmon and trout found in the chilled aisles of expensive supermarkets like Woolworths. Fish is snoek. It is what is bought at the end of the day on the main road in your area, or on Sunday morning near the graveyard. It is bought from the local fish seller out of the back of his bakkie. It is a personal interaction – you decide which fish, how you want it cut whilst you chat with the seller and hear about the state of fishing and how the fishermen are doing. It is Sunday afternoons with the family, playing cards or dominoes. It is learning how to count, laugh and be communal. It is social and cultural cohesion. It is about the collective contribution to getting the fish to the table. The collecting of the money, buying, cleaning, preparing, serving, disposing of the bones, are all parts of a whole.

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<sup>112</sup> Thara Srinivasan, Reg Watson and U. Rashid Sumaila, “Global Fisheries Losses at the Exclusive Economic Zone Level, 1950 to 2004,” *Marine Policy* 36, no. 2 (2012): 544–549.

<sup>113</sup> Srinivasan, Watson and Sumaila, “Global Fisheries Losses,” 7.

<sup>114</sup> Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Governance,” 17.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.



Everyone has a role when the fish is socially embedded outside the formal market. This fish is life. This, however, has increasingly come under threat due to the commodification and commercialisation of fisheries.

### **5.10 Corporate versus community fishing**

Small-scale fisheries catch almost half of all fish caught for global consumption.<sup>116</sup> Important work has been done to show the significance of subsistence fishers from the point of view of providing livelihoods and food security.<sup>117</sup> Unlike other places in the world, small-scale fisheries contribute less than 1% of fish caught in South Africa.<sup>118</sup> According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), however, “small-scale and artisanal fisheries ... play an important role in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization.”<sup>119</sup> This is important in the context of South Africa, where there is extreme inequality and high unemployment, making small-scale fisheries relevant for livelihoods and food sovereignty. Small-scale fisheries have the ability to meet multiple needs with a minimal carbon footprint whilst placing less strain on the marine commons and creating the greatest potential to facilitate food sovereignty.

Small-scale fisheries promote an alternative approach to commercial fisheries, which encapsulate a logic of sufficiency. The distinctive form, scale and tools of this approach are vastly different from commercial fisheries. Embedded in small-scale fisheries are the traditional forms of fishing. This consists of one to no more than a few fishers collectively casting a line from the shore or net from a small boat, returning with the catch of the day for same-day sale and use. The fish is fresh and seasonal. It feeds the fishers’ family, neighbours and local community. In general, small-scale fisheries are driven by the local market where people know their fishers and know their fish. Small-scale fisheries are low-tech operations, which are not capital intensive. They tend to produce minimal waste. By its nature, small-scale fishing is guided by the weather and seasons. Over-harvesting is unlikely. Small-scale

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<sup>116</sup> Isaacs and Hara, “Backing Small-scale Fishers,” 6. Also see Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, “Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries: Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development Report, 13 – 17 October 2008 Bangkok, Thailand” (Rome: FAO, 2008), accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1227t/i1227t.pdf>.

<sup>117</sup> See for instance the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) “Voluntary Guidelines for SSF,” 2015; and FAO “Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition,” 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Isaacs and Hara, “Backing Small-scale Fishers,” 6.

<sup>119</sup> FAO, “Voluntary Guidelines,” ix.

fisheries rest on a logic of “enough is considered a good catch.” They show respect and understanding of the ocean and fish.

The “Economic and Sectoral Study of the South African Fishing Industry” shows that “trawl fisheries are the largest, the most valuable and in some instances the most sophisticated of all commercial fishing sectors in South Africa.”<sup>120</sup> It also shows that “in contrast to all other fishing sectors ... trawl fisheries did not develop along the normal trajectory from subsistence to small scale to a large scale industrial fishery. Instead, from its early beginnings in the 1890s the trawl industry has operated as a ‘modern’ fishery.”<sup>121</sup> In many ways, this report illustrates the overarching state policy to support commercial fisheries and undermine small-scale fisheries and related livelihoods. From the outset, commercial fisheries operated in open-access oceans until the apartheid regime sought to protect its commercial fisheries by prohibiting non-South African trawlers in its oceans. During the apartheid period, the state subsidised South African commercial fisheries. Today the largest and most mature fishing industry is demersal trawling, which had already started in the 1890s.<sup>122</sup> The scale and support for commercial fisheries by the state is at the expense of support to small-scale fisheries and is wasteful.

Hake is the most valuable and industrialised element of South Africa’s fisheries. This is a highly capital and labour intensive industry.<sup>123</sup> Its development and history is inextricably linked to the company Irvin and Johnson (I&J), a commercial fishery. From the onset of the industry, an oligopoly existed with indirect security of tenure.<sup>124</sup> By 2000, 84% of Total Allocated Catch (TAC) was generated through deep sea trawling. According to Sauer et al., “[a]s early as 1905 G.D. Irvin realised that the survival of the industry in the Cape would be entirely dependent on an efficient cold storage, distribution and marketing network to the Witwatersrand, which led him to acquire a cold storage company and then scheduling the famous fish train to Johannesburg.”<sup>125</sup> Irvin and Johnson registered 27 trawlers in 1922 with additional

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<sup>120</sup> W.H.H. Sauer, T. Hecht, P.J. Britz, & D. Mather, “An Economic and Sectoral Study of the South African Fishing Industry, Volume 2: Fishery Profiles,” Report prepared for Marine and Coastal Management Rhodes University (2003): 39.

<sup>121</sup> Sauer et al, “Economic and Sectoral Study,” 39.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 42.

interests in whaling and sealing.<sup>126</sup> After the ‘rape’ in the 1960s and the 1970s, property rights “were introduced at a time when stocks were in need of rebuilding.”<sup>127</sup>

From the “Economic and Sectorial Study of the South Africa Fishing Industry” report it is clear that commercial fisheries have caused major depletion of stocks in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 1980s there have been attempts to rebuild fish stocks. This is not only true for demersal catches (sole, hake and yellow tail) but also, for instance, pelagic catches (anchovies and pilchards), squid, tuna and lobster. Commercial fisheries are characterised by the harvesting and sale of wild-caught fish for commercial sales and mostly rely on machine driven vessels, which are a minimum length of 25m. The vessels utilise high-end technology, generally have many workers on board, and are out on the deep seas for long periods of time. The vessels harvest large quantities of fish and often have cold-storage facilities aboard. These commercial vessels are fishery factories on the seas. Oftentimes these communities of men are migrant labourers at sea, dislocated and removed from their communities and families.

The FAO report highlights that by contrast, “small-scale fisheries tend to be strongly anchored in local communities, reflecting often historic links to adjacent fishery resources, traditions and values and supporting social cohesion.”<sup>128</sup> This contrast reflects the difference and history between the alienated waged worker and the livelihoods of those living off traditional craft and cottage skills. The former, is based on the logic of efficiency in the marketplace, and the latter, on the logic of sufficiency for a community.

After 1994, “subsistence fishers were recognised for the first time by the MLRA and given legal rights to access marine resources.”<sup>129</sup> In May 2014, the MLRA was promulgated. In it, small-scale fishers are defined as

members of a small-scale fishing community engaged in fishing to meet food and basic livelihood needs, or directly involved in processing or marketing of fish, who traditionally operate in near-shore fishing grounds; mainly employ traditional low technology or passive fishing gear; undertake single-day fishing trips; and are engaged in consumption, barter or sale of fish or otherwise involved in commercial activity, all within the small-scale fisheries

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 53–47. Rape refers to the violation and depletion of the oceans.

<sup>128</sup> FAO, “Voluntary Guidelines,” x.

<sup>129</sup> Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Reform,” 54.

sector.<sup>130</sup>

The South African government introduced ITQ-based fisheries management as a means to facilitate redress and transformation.<sup>131</sup> Isaacs points out, however, that “ITQs are de facto property access rights or privileges, and are primarily concerned with promoting economic efficiency rather than conservation, community welfare or equity.”<sup>132</sup> Her observations concur with the arguments made by Macinko earlier in this chapter.<sup>133</sup>

The logic of efficiency as described by Princen, and outlined and discussed in Chapter 2, has numerous problems. In the context of fisheries in South Africa, an important lesson to draw from the modern and commercial fisheries’ history since the early 1900s, is that the logic of efficiency resulted in massive stock exploitation over many decades, and specifically the stock depletion in the 1960s and 1970s. This very efficient vertical and highly commercialised sector, which sought to catch, market and distribute competitively in domestic and international spheres, plundered the South African marine commons and changed social relations such that we see greater inequality, loss of livelihood and loss of previous forms of food sovereignty and independence.

The early commercialisation and industrialised dominance of the industry has masked the fisher and the fish. The orthodox logic of efficiency and the market has hidden the skills required in fishing as well as the socio-cultural losses confronted by those in small-scale fisheries. The possibilities and alternatives that small-scale fisheries present for a different paradigm of fish-food-community-marine commons as public goods must be brought to the fore. This logic of efficiency, whereby the market can indiscriminately allocate rights to historically disadvantaged individuals, has been shown to be highly problematic. If instead, the logic of sufficiency were applied, then bona fide fishers would be allocated rights and overfishing and wastage would be avoided entirely, as the long history of fishing and tradition cultivates a system that

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<sup>130</sup> Isaacs and Hara, “Backing Small-scale Fishers,” 12.

<sup>131</sup> Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Governance,” 17. Also see Hara and Raakjær-Nielsen, “Policy Evolution in South Africa Fisheries;” Isaacs et al. 2007; Isaacs 2011 a, b, c.

<sup>132</sup> Isaacs, “Small-scale Fisheries Governance,” 18. Isaacs’ work draws on Copes and Charles 2004, McCay 2004, Sumaila 2010.

<sup>133</sup> Seth, Macinko, “Has the Leopard Changed its Spots?”

ensures sustainability, as opposed to seeing the ocean and fish as a convenient place to turn a quick profit.

The World Forum on Fisher People (WFFP), an international forum on fisher people, and the Masifundise Development Trust, a South African NGO working with small-scale fisher folk, often link their demands to and call for “the right to food sovereignty.”<sup>134</sup> They demand the recognition of a “small-scale fisheries model as preferred to exclusive economic zones,” and make a call to “reverse and prevent the privatization of fisheries resources, as through individual transferable quotas (ITQs) and similar systems that promote property rights.”<sup>135</sup> They argue that industrial fishing should be prohibited inshore and seek to “prevent the displacement of fishing communities through the privatization of waters and lands of fishing communities for activities that include tourism, aquaculture, defence/military establishments, conservation and industry.”<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, they “reject industrial aquaculture and genetically modified and exotic species in aquaculture.”<sup>137</sup> Fisher people around the world and in South Africa are defending the marine commons.

According to the 2015 WFFP and World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers’ statement on COP21, they declared, “No to blue carbon, yes to food sovereignty and to climate justice.”<sup>138</sup> Their powerful statement asserts that

as the devastating consequences of climate change become ever more disastrous, it is likewise becoming ever more clear that the corporate-dominated UNFCCC-negotiations are not part of the solution but part of the problem. Instead of the necessary systemic changes that stop the profit-driven plunder of the earth’s resources through fossil-fuel extraction and deforestation, the only proposals coming from the negotiators are corporate friendly market-based solutions. In these so-called solutions, the prerequisite is to not conflict with corporate interests and corporate power but to strengthen them, by giving them more control over our natural resources.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> World Forum of Fisher People, “Bangkok Civil Society Statement on Small Scale Fisheries,” October 2008, accessed November 20, 2015, <http://worldfishers.org/2008/10/17/bangkok-civil-society-statement-small-scale-fisheries-2/>.

<sup>135</sup> World Forum of Fisher People, “Bangkok Civil Society Statement on Small Scale Fisheries,” October 2008.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> World Forum of Fisher People, “World Forum of Fish Harvesters, Fish Workers Statement on COP21 negotiation in Paris,” Dec 2015, <http://worldfishers.org/2015/12/11/no-to-blue-carbon-yes-to-food-sovereignty-and-climate-justice/>.

<sup>139</sup> World Forum of Fisher People, “World Forum of Fish Harvesters.”

The statement further declares that creating blue carbon is a false solution. More than anything else, blue carbon seeks to commodify and commercialise new forms of the marine commons which is yet another attempt by commercial fisheries to employ green capitalism and market mechanisms as solutions. These solutions are propelled by the belief in the logic of efficiency and the accompanying assumption that the privatisation of the marine commons is in the interest of humanity. The WFFP argues that the solution to the ecological crisis, climate change and the marine commons' depletion is small-scale fishers and small-scale farmers. According to the WFFP,

aside from being ecologically just, small-scale fisheries also provide a livelihood for 90% of the some half a billion people employed in capture fisheries – half of which are women. Small-scale fishers are therefore a key actor in the struggle to ensure truly sustainably managed resources in a way that does not undermine the socio-economic needs of the many people, often highly marginalized, that are dependent on aquatic resources across the world and notably in the Global South.<sup>140</sup>

### **5.11 Renewability – a natural and a commercial concept**

Renewability of fish stocks coupled with the commodification of fish and the commercialisation of fisheries has led to massive exploitation and undermined the self-sustainability of fish. According to the FAO, “fish stocks are a renewable resource ... [but] over the years, [we] have suffered from a widespread notion that the seas are inexhaustible, economic pressures that have encouraged overexploitation and, until just over a decade ago, an international regime that gave almost unlimited access to the majority of them.”<sup>141</sup> Another FAO study spanning the period 1950–2008 reported that at least 25% of the world's fish stocks have collapsed.<sup>142</sup>

In support of the FAO findings, Pitcher and Cheung highlight that “recent analyses of fishery catches indicate that 70% of all world fish populations are unsustainably overexploited, while almost half of these (30% overall) have biomass collapsed to less than 10% of unfished levels.”<sup>143</sup> They furthermore suggest that

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<sup>140</sup> World Forum of Fisher People, “World Forum of Fish Harvesters.”

<sup>141</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), “Harvesting Nature's Diversity,” Rome. 1993.

<sup>142</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture.” Rome: FAO, 2012. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2727e.pdf>.

<sup>143</sup> Pitcher and Cheung, “Fisheries: Hope or Despair,” 508.

forecast trends suggest imminent collapse.<sup>144</sup> This ecological crisis demands serious questions of the reliance on modelling mechanisms to determine sustainability of fisheries. Substantial evidence suggests that many fish stocks are not able to rebuild due to over-depletion and collapsing stocks, leading to the extinction of various fish species.

South Africa reports annually on the status of fish stocks, taking into account the environmental influences, management systems and harvesting ratios. The 2014 report noted that “50% of stocks are considered to be of concern ... of these, 22% are considered depleted or heavily fished, and 28% are considered heavily depleted.”<sup>145</sup> This signals an unhealthy marine environment for South Africa, suggesting that the state needs to reflect on and re-examine its approach to fisheries. The approach adopted by DAFF in response to the dwindling stock, however, is technical and economic. The promotion of aquaculture through Operation Phakisa occurs despite the knowledge that “overfishing, and its associated environmental impacts, is our biggest global environmental challenge alongside the climate change that we currently face.”<sup>146</sup>

Over the years, fisheries science in South Africa has developed sophisticated technologies, tools and models to harvest and assess the status of its fish stocks. Indeed, this approach offers the convenience and choice of buying the fish desired throughout the year, fresh or frozen, regardless of seasonality, at supermarkets all over the world. This however begs the question: At what cost? Could it be conceivable to eat fish seasonally rather than risk the complete depletion of stocks or the ruin of the marine commons?

The ecological challenge of overfishing and small-scale fishers is rarely foregrounded within the ecological crisis discourse or within the dominant commercial fisheries, thus creating little challenge to the way in which commercial fishing is conducted. The increasing consumption of fish, the rate of harvesting and new technologies, have not set off alarms or generated campaigns for Save the Fish, as happened with Save the Rhino. According to Sahrhage and Lundbeck, although “humans have exploited fish populations for food and profit for thousands of years ...

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, “Status of The South African Marine Fishery Resources 2014,” Cape Town, 2014, 1.

<sup>146</sup> Kerry Haggard, “South African Fishing is Sustainable,” *Mail & Guardian* November 20, 2015, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-11-20-00-south-african-fishing-is-sustainable>.

the last 150 years have seen huge increases in geographic reach and depth range, an unprecedented fishing intensity through new technology, and a global commoditization of fishery products.”<sup>147</sup> This has affected fish stock renewability.

Today, across the globe, aquaculture runs parallel to the wild harvesting of fish by commercial and small-scale fishers. Aquaculture occurs on land and is the farming of fish in controlled conditions outside the ocean or natural rivers whilst simulating these conditions.<sup>148</sup> In 2014, the FAO reported that almost half of the fish consumed today are produced through aquaculture.<sup>149</sup> In 2012, on a global scale, 158 million tonnes of fish is produced by capture fisheries and aquaculture combined, and some 66.5 million tonnes is farmed fish.<sup>150</sup> This has increased from 13.4% of fish production in 1990 and 25.7% in 2000.<sup>151</sup> These figures reveal the scale of fisheries. Aquaculture is being presented as one solution to the declining health of the marine commons and fish stocks. Can this approach address the serious nature of the ecological crisis? Can it be a long-lasting solution with no ecologically detrimental effects?

It is argued that the rapid growth in aquaculture is meant to meet the demand in rising global fish consumption.<sup>152</sup> Farming of fish is now similar to the rapid commercialisation of maize production. At present, the genetic modification and mono-cropping of maize commercially, it is argued, create drought and pest resistant crops so as to meet global food demands. Currently though, maize is commercially produced for animal feed and more recently for biofuels. This indicates that maize production’s sole purpose is no longer to provide food. FishStat indicates that over the last three decades, “capture fisheries production increased from 69 million to 93 million tons; during the same time, world aquaculture production increased from 5

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<sup>147</sup> Pitcher and Cheung, “Fisheries: Hope or Despair,” 506.

<sup>148</sup> According to Bernal and Oliva, “The cultivation of farmed food fish is the aquatic version of animal husbandry, where full control of the life cycle enables the domestication of wild species, their growth in large-scale farming systems and the application of well-known and well-established techniques of animal artificial selection of desirable traits, such as resistance to diseases, fast growth and size.” UN, “The First Global Integrated Marine Assessment, World Ocean Assessment I,” Chapter 12 (2016): 4, accessed April 29, 2016, [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global\\_reporting/WOA\\_RegProcess.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.html).

<sup>149</sup> According to Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2014, nearly half (49%) of all fish consumed globally in 2012 came from aquaculture.

<sup>150</sup> FAO, “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014” and “United Nations Oceans and Law of the Sea, World Oceans Report,” World Oceans Report, Chapter 12, accessed April 29, 2016, [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global\\_reporting/WOA\\_RegProcess.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.html).

<sup>151</sup> FAO, “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014.”

<sup>152</sup> FAO/NACA, 2012. “Farming the Waters for People and Food,” in Proceedings of the Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010, ed. R.P. Subasinghe, J.R. Arthur, D.M. Bartley, S.S. De Silva, M. Halwart, N. Hishamunda, C.V. Mohan & P. Sorgeloos, Phuket, Thailand, 22–25 September 2010, (Rome: FAO and Bangkok: FAO, Rome and NACA), accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2734e/i2734e.pdf>.



million to 63 million tons.”<sup>153</sup> This is a massive increase, and demonstrates both the exploitation of wild fish as well as the way fish farming has grown in a manner similar to that of maize farming.

Mariculture is commercial fish farming in contained areas within an ocean or river. It is the farming of fish as a cash-crop and “includes a large proportion of carnivorous species, such as salmon, trout and groupers, higher in unit value and destined to supply more affluent markets.”<sup>154</sup> Purportedly, farming of fish is to ensure food security and aims to meet the needs of increases in fish protein consumption, but as a cash-crop yielding high returns for a preferred food secure market, it calls the rationale of food security into question.<sup>155</sup> The idea of maize and fish as cash crops needs to be problematised.

The approach of fishing-for-development to meet the Millennium Development Goals was a key feature of the 2008 World Development Report.<sup>156</sup> Propelled by the argument of meeting the food needs of a growing population, fish stocks and production are showing similar trends to maize stocks as commodities. The conservation approach, which is exemplified by interventions to protect rhinoceros stock, is less apparent. The latter, has benefitted from a flurry of international conservation campaigns and ambassadors signalling the importance of wildlife and nature, whereas maize is seen as food with no intrinsic value or connection to nature.

To a large extent, this is a result of decades of maize mono-cropping, the proliferation of genetically modified (GM) maize production and the mega-industry of maize and related production. Rhinoceros by contrast, are considered endangered species as they are the targets of poaching and their horns are connected to illicit trade and trafficking. The dangers of mono-cropping, GMOs and use of chemical pesticide that are harmful to the soil, water, air and our bodies are well documented by organisations in South Africa.<sup>157</sup> Unfortunately this knowledge has fallen on deaf ears. South Africa is the first country in Africa that promoted and cultivated GM

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<sup>153</sup> World Bank, “Fish to 2030: Prospects for Fishing and Aquaculture” (Washington DC: World Bank Report, 2013), xiii.

<sup>154</sup> “United Nations Oceans and Law of the Sea,” World Oceans Report, Chapter 12, accessed April 29, 2016, [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global\\_reporting/WOA\\_RegProcess.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RegProcess.html).

<sup>155</sup> Masifundise Development Trust, “The Global Ocean Grab: A Primer” (Cape Town: Masifundise, 2014), 31.

<sup>156</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (Washington: WB, 2007).

<sup>157</sup> See work by Africa Centre for Biodiversity, “Glyphosate in SA: Risky pesticide at large and unregulated in our soil and water,” 2012; Biowatch South Africa, “Factsheet: GMOs in South Africa,” 2016; to mention two organisations.

maize at the expense of local and indigenous maize.<sup>158</sup> The campaign calling for “No to GMO maize,” in South Africa, at the start of the WTO negotiations, did not find groundswell support. The South African government, however, bought wholesale into IMF/WB and WTO propaganda and economic frameworks.

Aquaculture and mariculture, like mono maize cropping, come with huge environmental risks, but they also “side-step the context-specific political questions of who ought to decide what is to be fished, where and how.”<sup>159</sup> In the case of the former, it is necessary to point out that large tracts of land are required, and in many cases this has resulted in community displacement and land grabs in order to set up aqua ponds.<sup>160</sup> In both forms of farming, there are risks of disease, parasites, bacterial and viral infections and water and land contamination. Traditional and small-scale fishers’ communities are being displaced through commercial fishing but also moved off land to make space for commercial aquaculture and mariculture ponds. Moreover, commercial aquaculture and mariculture increase small-scale fishers and the marine commons vulnerability.

Naylor et al. alert us that “aquaculture’s pressure on forage fisheries remains hotly contested.”<sup>161</sup> This is in part due to the high demand of wild fishmeal and fish oil, the production of which requires aquaculture methods.<sup>162</sup> They highlight two main concerns given the “finite nature of global marine resources.”<sup>163</sup> One, “the lack of suitable substitutes for feed and oil, places pressure on price responsiveness, hence if no ‘appropriate substitutes’ are found, prices will rise.”<sup>164</sup> And two, that “globalization of fishmeal and fish oil trade has resulted in lower traceability of the origin of feed and hence reduced accountability by feed consumers for the pressure they place on specific forage fisheries.”<sup>165</sup> This means that the origins of the fish have become increasingly invalid.<sup>166</sup> These concerns indicate the challenges of

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<sup>158</sup> African Centre for Biodiversity, “GM Maize: Lessons for Africa – Cartels, Collusion and Control over South Africa’s Staple Food” (Melville, ACB: 2014), 4. In 1997 South Africa became the first country in the world to allow cultivation of GM maize. According to ACB “adoption by our commercial maize farmers has been rapid, with 86% of the 2012/13 season maize crop being genetically modified. The vast majority of South Africans are completely unaware of this shocking state of affairs.”

<sup>159</sup> Masifundise, “Global Ocean Grab,” 31.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Naylor et al., “Feeding Aquaculture in an Era of Finite Resources,” *PNAS* 106 (2009): 15103, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0905235106>.

<sup>162</sup> Naylor et al., “Feeding aquaculture,” 15104.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

commodifying and commercialising fish through aquaculture, highlighting the unsustainable pressures placed on the marine commons and small-scale fishing communities, as well as issues pertaining to safety with regards to eating commercially farmed fish.

The WBs “Fish to 2030” report outlines the rate of growth of aquaculture but also important challenges. The report states that “aquaculture has grown at an impressive rate over the past decades ... But supplying fish sustainably—producing it without depleting productive natural resources and without damaging the precious aquatic environment—is a huge challenge. We continue to see excessive and irresponsible harvesting in capture fisheries and in aquaculture.”<sup>167</sup> In South Africa today, aquaculture is in its infancy but there is growing financial support and motivation from the state and corporates to farm fish.<sup>168</sup> Aquaculture, however, does not address the declining fish stocks and sustainability issues of the South African oceans or oceans more generally. Neither does it address the critical questions raised concerning what is farmed?, how much? and for whom? Commercial aquaculture as a technical solution to a fundamental question of the marine commons and fish stocks will only avert the problem temporarily. Could a solution be that we consume on a smaller scale and more wisely?

In 2008, the WFFP declared that they “reject industrial aquaculture and genetically modified and exotic species in aquaculture.”<sup>169</sup> The Slow Food Movement argues that industrial aquaculture is not a solution to overfishing.<sup>170</sup> Both movements highlight the negative environmental damage of excessive organic waste from aquaculture that causes problems for the ecosystem. Specifically, the movement rejects that “genetically modified tuna, salmon and tilapia are now being farmed ... research in this sector is growing rapidly in many countries ... aimed primarily at sterilization, speeding up growth rates and improving resistance to cold and disease.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> World Bank, “Fish for 2030: Prospects for Fisheries and Aquaculture,” Agriculture and Environmental Services Discussion Paper 03 (Washington: World Bank, 2013).

<sup>168</sup> Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, “National Aquaculture Policy Framework for South Africa,” *Government Gazette* 763, no.36920 (2013): 2; See Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, “Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP) 2015 – 2019,” (Cape Town: Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2015).

<sup>169</sup> World Forum of Fisher Peoples, “Bangkok Civil Society Statement on Small-scale Fisheries,” October 2008.

<sup>170</sup> Slow Food, “Aquaculture,” accessed September 18, 2016, [http://slowfood.com/slowfish/pagine/eng/pagina.lasso?-id\\_pg=44](http://slowfood.com/slowfish/pagine/eng/pagina.lasso?-id_pg=44).

<sup>171</sup> Slow Food, “Aquaculture.”

The recent developments in aquaculture suggest the further commodification and techno-industrialisation of fish. This side-steps the critical questions posed by the ecological crisis and specifically the overexploitation of the marine commons and fish in particular. More so, commercial farming of fish and fisheries maintain the dominant social relations that are central to fishing-for-profit and not fishing for need. Industrial fish farming reinforces the conception of nature formed during the Scientific Revolution; that is, that man, through science, can dominate nature for his own ends. I argue that this approach will not assist us in overcoming the ecological crisis; it will only exacerbate it. Locating fish, and those who fish, especially small-scale fishers, within a broader holistic world view which fosters an appreciation of fish and fishers as deeply interconnected, will go a long way to recognise the “polyvalence” of fish and fishing communities.

Most people have no idea that the fish they eat is farmed and many more do not know that fish farming places the ecosystem at risk. The argument that we need fish farming in order to feed people needs to be challenged. Fish farming is not only expensive, but also mainly caters to the middle class and the first world. It is commercially viable because the fish is sold to those who can afford the expensive price tag of salmon, trout, shrimps, oysters, etc. This reveals part of the motivation behind farming fish.

Permission to farm fish is one step away from conceding to modifying fish through vaccines and genetic engineering techniques. This is permission to alter the genetic code of organisms. It is important to understand that genetically modified crops require huge amounts of chemicals and constant scientific know-how and new and improved chemical and genetically modified varieties. The pesticides used for maize, for instance, and their effects on the environment are most famously documented in Rachel Carsons’ *Silent Spring*. In South Africa the work by the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) reports the adverse effects of GMOs and pesticides but also bring to the fore what this means for smallholder farmers and farm workers. ACB furthermore asks “who owns our food system?”<sup>172</sup> This is a critical question for the fishing industry, given the antibiotics and vaccines used in aquaculture, all of which carry dangers for nature and people.

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<sup>172</sup> African Centre for Biodiversity, “Who owns our staple food system?” (2014), accessed October 12, 2015, <http://acbio.org.za/category/gmos/insouthafrica>.

However, farming fish is a key component of Operation Phakisa. DAFF is aware of the challenges and risks of farming fish, but prioritises a mandate which seeks to manage the development and sustainable use of resources, and to maximise the economic potential of the sector.<sup>173</sup> In other words, it has to ensure capitalist development and therefore capitalist sustainability. DAFF's mandate states: "In line with international trends, the department recognizes fisheries as an economic activity rather than a purely environmental or biodiversity matter."<sup>174</sup>

It is this mandate and earlier approach by the South Africa state, as outlined from the earliest of periods, which rests on a narrow conception of fish and therefore nature, which favours commercial fishing and validates the logic of efficiency. This approach has, over time, eroded the cultural, social and customary practices of fishing communities in South Africa. This erosion and active prioritising of profit over fish and community has turned communities into factories.

In so doing, it has destroyed livelihoods, food sovereignty and community autonomy. The adoption of ideas and assumptions from the Scientific Revolution, has altered and transformed coastal communities.

The factory strips away the historical relationship within communities and between people and with the marine commons. It strips away an organic rhythm, respect and solidarity between people and nature. The commercial fish factory on land or on large-scale commercial vessels makes invisible both the historical and existing small-scale fishing communities' social ecologies. The factory eats away at the relationships that coastal communities have with each other, with fish and the ocean. The factory creates, institutionalises and cements particular social relations between people. These social relations are not of equals but are dependant on the exploitation and domination over workers, fishing communities and fish.

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<sup>173</sup> Republic of South Africa, "Fisheries," last modified September 17, 2016, <http://www.gov.za/about-SA/fisheries>.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion - Liberation Ideology and Ecological Crisis**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This dissertation has studied the politics of the ecological crisis by focussing on the politics of land, mining and fishing. I have examined how government policy in these areas conceives of the relationship between nature and society. I have traced the inherited assumptions, ideas and arguments underpinning the relationship between nature and society, so as to make visible the ecological discourse in South Africa after apartheid.

If this dissertation has done what it set out to do, it should be clear that nature is conceived of mainly as a natural resource and object to be extracted, controlled and dominated. This capitalist conception of nature has enabled and reinforced private ownership of nature and its objectification and commodification. I argue here that these are central features in land, mining and fishing policy respectively. These policies are laden with arguments of racial redress, transformation and redistribution, centring the legacy of racial dispossession and liberation ideology as prime motivators, obscuring the dominant conception of nature.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, it was argued that another relationship to nature simultaneously requires another relationship to society, premised on new social relations. In these chapters, I have shown how nature and society are affected and transformed over time by ideas of nature formed in the Scientific Revolution, which espoused market-based relations.

In this final chapter, I turn to the question of political perspectives on why the South Africa government has narrowly focused on climate change and environmental policy, whilst neglecting the multi-dimensional nature of the ecological crisis. I argue that the government's policy assumptions and approach to ecological modernisation and liberation ideology undermine the possibilities of another relationship to nature.

The overwhelming effects of climate change have obliged all countries to enter into framework discussions and policy negotiations. Policies at national and international levels are being developed and implemented. This chapter aims to (i) show the reality and ideology of how the South African government is addressing the issue of climate change; (ii) outline critiques to the ANC's neoliberal and ecological modernisation approach that has emerged in opposition to its ecological policies; and (iii) discuss whether there are elements of an alternative modernity emerging in and

from the struggles of working-class communities. In the process, this chapter provides an inventory and assessment of (supposed or real) agents for change in the South African ecological context.

## **6.2 South Africa as “Champions of the earth”: liberation ideology and the environment**

South Africa is centrally positioned in climate change negotiations, specifically with the aim to place Africa on the global agenda.<sup>1</sup> The country often mediates and facilitates discussions between the global North and South with regard to competing environmental agendas, and plays a prominent role in global environmental diplomacy.<sup>2</sup> This is the role the country plays in peacekeeping and multilateral trade negotiations, in keeping with its African renaissance agenda and liberation ideology of Africanism and internationalism. Already as early as 1996, Thabo Mbeki made his famous, “I am an African” speech, which can be perhaps considered a precursor to conceptions and articulations of nature as having similar rights to human beings, in the context of citizenship and legal standing. The speech opens thus:

I am an African.

I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land.

At times, and in fear, I have wondered whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the leopard and the lion, the elephant and the springbok, the hyena, the black mamba and the pestilential mosquito.

A human presence among all these, a feature on the face of our native land thus defined, I know that none dare challenge me when I say - I am an African!<sup>3</sup>

In 2002 the country hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and in 2005 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) awarded the South African government as “Champions of the Earth,” for the lead role it played in environmental governance and its “commitment to cultural and environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Death, “Leading by Example: South African Foreign Policy and Global and Global Environmental Politics,” *International Relations* 25 (2011): 466. He further argues that “the overarching framework of South African environmental policy is defined in terms of sustainable development, based around the commitments made in Johannesburg in 2002 and dovetailing with the broader policy commitments to development, poverty eradication and the ending of Africa’s international marginalization,” 467.

<sup>2</sup> See Death, “Leading by Example,” 467.

<sup>3</sup> Thabo Mbeki, “I am an African,” Speech given in Cape Town, 8 May 1996, on passing of South Africa’s new constitution.

diversity.”<sup>4</sup> In 2011 the country hosted the Conference of the Parties (COP17) and in 2015 South Africa “led the Group of 77 plus China at COP21 in Paris in a successful negotiation process that resulted in the Paris Agreement.”<sup>5</sup>

More recently the government championed two processes at the United Nations with regard to the environment. First, the UN resolution on “Harmony with Nature,” which is an initiative attempting to develop an earth-centred worldview where the “planet is not considered to be an inanimate object to be exploited, but as our common home, alive and subject to a plethora of dangers to its health.”<sup>6</sup> The initiative engages with earth jurisprudence perspectives, arguing for a holistic system of governance. This perspective stresses that “economic growth for some has been achieved at the expense of the natural world,” and that “[a]t the core of the current anthropocentric worldview, the Earth is viewed as a source of raw materials to be commercialized, exploited, modified, altered and privatized.”<sup>7</sup> This initiative draws on indigenous practices and knowledge. It furthermore recognises that nature has constitutional rights in certain nation states and therefore seeks to develop principles of eco-democracy, spirituality, and ethics.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the South African government played a lead role in the UN with regard to a treaty binding countries to certain human rights and business regulations. With Ecuador, the South African government has drafted a resolution to foster a treaty to replace the current voluntary guidelines. The resolution has been signed by Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.<sup>9</sup> South Africa played a lead role in securing the support of these countries. International NGOs such as FirstFood Information and Action Network (FIAN), the Transnational Institute (TNI) and the Treaty Alliance are

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Environmental Programme, “First-Ever UNEP ‘Champions of the Earth’ Presented to Seven Environmental Leaders,” accessed June 26, 2013, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=430&ArticleID=4775&I=en>.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Minister Edna Molewa’s speech delivered by Deputy Director-General of Climate Change and Air Quality, Ms Judy Beaumont, at the National Stakeholder Consultation Session in Preparation for COP 22/CMP12,” accessed November 2, 2016, [https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa\\_atnationalstakeholder\\_consultationsessionforCOP22](https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa_atnationalstakeholder_consultationsessionforCOP22).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “Harmony with Nature A/71/266,” 2, accessed September 16, 2016, <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/documents.html>.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “Harmony with Nature A/71/266,” 4.

<sup>8</sup> For a quick overview see UN “Harmony with Nature”: <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development,” Human Rights Council 26th session, accessed at September 16, 2016, <https://documents-dds.ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G14/064/48/PDF/G1406448.pdf?OpenElement>.



rallying around and support the call.<sup>10</sup> The South African government argues that this work at the UN reflects the guiding principles in its Bill of Rights.

These global highlights give a false picture of national concerns about the government's ecological modernisation approach. According to the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) country report on integrating environment and development, they "were concerned there was a dominant political paradigm that remained entrenched in promoting large-scale extractive industries (mining), pursuing high impact industrial projects (for example energy-intensive smelters, toll roads), and large scale agro-industries especially linked with genetically modified crops."<sup>11</sup> The report highlighted that "[t]hese initiatives tended to favour the elite and growing consumerist society."<sup>12</sup> One account for this tendency, which contributes to an unsustainable relationship with nature, is the ANC national liberation movement's critique of the apartheid state. Its critique was not against the capitalist economic approach of the apartheid state per se, but with its racist, separatist and segregationist approach, such that many ANC policies have been geared towards to neoliberalism and establishing a black bourgeoisie.<sup>13</sup>

According to Carl Death, "tensions remain between South Africa's performance and rhetoric on the global stage, and domestic development paths which continue to be environmentally unsustainable."<sup>14</sup> He notes that "while environment issues have rarely taken centre stage in foreign policy circles, it is significant that the environment and the landscape are powerful cultural and political motifs in South Africa."<sup>15</sup> This is part of South Africa's rainbow nation identity-building process and government often "render[s] 'the environment' as a potentially nodal concept in South African national branding."<sup>16</sup> Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, as well as William Beinart and Peter Coates, argue that the national identity of South Africa is tied to "landscape,

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance "Week of Mobilisation to #StopCorporateAbuse," FIAN, accessed November 2, 2016, [http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/week\\_of\\_mobilization\\_to\\_stopcorporateabuse/](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/week_of_mobilization_to_stopcorporateabuse/). See also "The Treaty on TNCs and the struggle to stop corporate impunity," TNI, accessed November 2, 2016, <https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-treaty-on-tncs-and-the-struggle-to-stop-corporate-impunity>.

<sup>11</sup> DBSA, "What Works For Us: A South African Country Report for Tactics, Tools and Methods for Integrating Environment and Development," (South Africa: DBSA, 2009), 13.

<sup>12</sup> DBSA, "What Works For Us," 13.

<sup>13</sup> For a convincing account of this approach, specifically under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, see William Gumede, "Was the ANC Trumped on the Economy" and "What's Wrong with Being Filthy Rich," in *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (Cape Town: Zebra Books, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Death, "Leading by Example," 455.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

flora and fauna” as well as “a deep-seated attachment to the land, soil, the open veldt, the mountains and the sea in the South African imagination” respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Central to the approach of ecological modernisation is that it “provides a way of thinking about how to move beyond the conflictual relationship that is often assumed to exist between the economy and the environment.”<sup>18</sup> There are numerous strands of ecological modernisation, as outlined briefly in Chapter 1.<sup>19</sup> But according to David Harvey’s critique, “[e]cological modernization depends upon and promotes a belief that economic activity systematically produces environmental harm and society should therefore adopt a proactive stance with respect to environmental regulation and ecological control.”<sup>20</sup> The approach argues that “prevention is preferable to cure.”<sup>21</sup> Implicit, however, in ecological modernisation is the notion that capitalist modernisation and economic development spawn environmental costs. These environmental damages are unavoidable and are supposedly the price to pay for progress.

At both national and international level, the South African government and business sector seem to be investing resources in environmental issues with the understanding that “prevention is preferable to cure.”<sup>22</sup> Are these approaches by the South Africa government and business what George Monbiot describes as tokenism at best, and at worst, a flurry of green capitalism and consumerism?<sup>23</sup> I argue that the South African government and business sector engender what can at best be described as green capitalism.

The account of the fishing and marine policy as discussed in Chapter 5 shows that minimal transformation, redistribution and redress has occurred within the neoliberal framework adopted. Moreover, Chapter 5 demonstrated, when unpacking Operation Phakisa, that the government’s approach is premised on market-based solutions, consumerism and economic growth and trade investments. In Chapter 5, I

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<sup>17</sup> Death, “Leading by Example,” 460. The citation is drawn from the work of Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, “Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State,” *The Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (2001): 627-651; William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995), 77.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Murphy, “Ecological modernisation,” *Geoforum* 31 (2000): 5.

<sup>19</sup> See Murphy, “Ecological Modernisation,” *Geoforum* 31 (2000): 1-8; Arthur PJ Mol and Gert Spaargaren, “Ecological Modernisation Theory in Debate: A Review,” *Environmental Politics* 9 (2000): 17-49.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of the origins of ecological modernisation see Murphy, “Ecological modernisation,” *Geoforum* 31 (2000): 1-8. For a critique see David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996): 377-383.

<sup>21</sup> Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 377.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> George Monbiot, *HEAT: How to Stop the Planet from Burning* (Allen Lane: Penguin, 2006).

argued that the government's conception of fish is that of commodity and that the policy approach is aimed to conserve so as to exploit, favouring large-scale commercial fishing at the expense of small-scale fishers, their communities and fish stocks.

According to Löwy, the burden of the ecological crisis will ultimately be placed on the poor.<sup>24</sup> This is most clearly shown in Chapter 4, where the many traumas of mining are set out. I argued that mining-affected communities and mineworkers are constantly faced with the ecological fall out of extractivism, be it filthy and polluted air, water, land, etc., or the illusions of service delivery and paid work. Chapter 4 made evident the objectification of mineworkers' labour, as well as mining-affected communities and minerals, which permits the externalisation of the social and ecological costs of mining onto poor communities in peripheral areas. In Chapter 3, I highlighted that small-scale farmers, especially women from the RWA, have argued that they carry the brunt of drought and increases in temperature and are unable to sustain themselves. In the same chapter I argued that farmworkers and the rural poor are exposed to high levels of toxins and chemicals on large commercial farms, and their safety is placed in jeopardy and not taken into account by agricultural policy.

Given the contrast of the South Africa international environmental engagements and its national ecological footprint in land, mining and fishing policy—as brought to the fore in Chapters 3, 4 and 5—is the international environmental identity and environmental imagination abroad mere branding and show? Or does the government approach reflect the history of the national liberation movement and the compromises of the negotiated settlement?

I argue that they are not simply branding, but are in fact deeply tied to the ANC's liberation ideology and its assumption that economic development and growth will deliver economic redistribution. At a national level, the ANC's compromise and sway towards neoliberal policies has reinforced the Freedom Charter articulations of making natural resources work for the people. This is reflected in Chapter 4 when looking at the mining-for-development approach. It is also reflected in Chapters 3 and 5, which show that the ANC's liberation ideology assumes that racial dispossession

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Löwy, "What is Ecosocialism?" in *Ecosocialism or Barbarism*, ed. J. Kelly and S. Malone (London: Socialist Resistance, 2006), 1.

can be remedied through racial transformation through private property ownership, as well as BEE quotas in fishing and BEE mining rights.

At an international level, through the struggle to overcome apartheid, the ANC as a liberation movement assumed the status of Africa's champion and a fighter against inequality between developed and developing states. After 1994, the new South African government assigned itself this role and almost always has a key seat in negotiations on behalf of Africa. It is globally positioned as defending human rights and resisting indignities. It is important to bear in mind that as the democratic state regained its international standing so did its corporations; many went transnational and were listed on international stock exchanges.

### **6.3 Reality and ideology**

According to the Yale Environmental Performance Index of 2012, South Africa ranked 128th out of 132 countries, making it "one of the world's worst performers and *the* worst in Africa."<sup>25</sup> The index "ranks the countries of the world on aggregated measures of environmental performance, in sectors like air and water quality, forest and fisheries protection, regulation of pesticides, and greenhouse gas emissions."<sup>26</sup> Given that South Africa's economy was and continues to be driven by a mineral-energy complex based on extractives, a highly mechanised commercial agricultural and finance sector, and since the late 1980s, a neoliberal export-orientated economy, these statistics should not come as a surprise.<sup>27</sup>

The country's Gini coefficient mirrors the Yale index ranking, making it one of the most unequal societies in the world.<sup>28</sup> This reality was reflected in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 and specifically came to the fore with the farmworkers' as well as mineworkers' strikes, as shown in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, and also demonstrated starkly in Chapter 3 when looking at the concentration of land before and after 1994.

The South Africa government acknowledges that it is the second-largest contributor to carbon emissions in Africa and that its greenhouse gas emissions per

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<sup>25</sup> "Troubling Trends for South Africa," Environmental Performance Index, accessed November 6, 2016, <http://epi.yale.edu/node/12125>.

<sup>26</sup> "Troubling Trends for South Africa." EPI is a problematic index and is not without critique. Recently Social Watch argued that the index "greenwashes" the rich.

<sup>27</sup> As outlined in Chapter 1.

<sup>28</sup> "Gini Index (World Bank Estimates)," The World Bank, accessed November 12, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?contextual=region&locations=ZA>.

capita are greater than other developing countries such as Brazil and China.<sup>29</sup> According to the DEA, “South Africa’s historically low-cost energy supply, together with the predominance of extractive industries, have combined to create our highly energy-intensive economy, with coal as the main fuel source, the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally the DEA recognises that “[c]oal dominates the South African energy system, accounting for 74% of primary energy supply and 23% of final energy consumption. In 2010, South Africa generated 94% of its electricity using coal.”<sup>31</sup>

The South African government, however, confidently states they have put mechanisms in place to respond adequately to the demands of climate change and intend to do so on the basis of “science and equity.”<sup>32</sup> The government argues that in response to agricultural strain and food insecurity in rural areas, as well as drought, water scarcity, coastal floods and rising ocean temperatures affecting livelihoods, they “have long put in place progressive, innovative and proactive policies and plans to deal with an ever-changing climate.”<sup>33</sup> Their overarching policies in this regard are “contained in the National Development Plan (NDP), National Strategy for Sustainable Development, a National Climate Change Response Policy, Green Economy Strategy, and Integrated Resource Plan (IRP),” as well as the Industrial Policy and Action Plan.<sup>34</sup>

In response to both the energy crisis and unemployment crisis in South Africa, the government has adopted a green economy approach, fuelled by a green technology revolution. In other words, the government has embarked on ecological modernisation, with the hope of fostering technological industrialisation and employment.<sup>35</sup> Aspects of the NDP have already been discussed and analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, but at the heart of ecological modernisation is the rhetoric of

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<sup>29</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs “Minister Edna Molewa’s speech delivered by Deputy Director-General of Climate Change and Air Quality, Ms Judy Beaumont, at the National Stakeholder Consultation Session in Preparation for COP 22/CMP12,” accessed November 2, 2016,

[https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa\\_atnationalstakeholder\\_consultationsessionforCOP22](https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa_atnationalstakeholder_consultationsessionforCOP22).

<sup>30</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs “Minister Edna Molewa’s speech.”

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Discussion Document: South Africa’s intended National Determined Contribution (INDC): 1 August 2015,” accessed February 3, 2016,

[https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11\\_climatechange\\_paris\\_position](https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11_climatechange_paris_position).

<sup>33</sup> “Summary of South Africa’s position at COP21-CMP 11 in Paris, France.” accessed February 3, 2016,

[https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11\\_climatechange\\_paris\\_position](https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11_climatechange_paris_position).

<sup>34</sup> “Summary of South Africa’s position at COP21-CMP 11 in Paris, France.”

<sup>35</sup> According to Death, ecological modernist theory “tended to focus on curbing industrial pollution, hi-tech green industry, advanced transport systems, large-scale renewable energy systems, and other ‘techno-fixes’,” whilst they neglected the kind of conservation practice which is prominent in Africa. See Death, “Leading by Example,” 126.

sustainability and the government's attempt to obscure the conflict and promote the belief that it is resolvable when firstly, there are prevention mechanisms in place and secondly, there is recognition that environmental costs must be factored in and assumed.

The South African government has adopted ecological modernisation as its approach, as reflected in the policies outlined below. According to government, it “plans to deal with an ever-changing climate” implying that they do not see climate change occurring as a result of the capitalist system, nor do they need to address the economic system per se. Instead, all they need to do is resolve the conflict and find a balance which, according to the government's approach—discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5—is via market-based instruments, such as property rights through WBWS, Mining Charter ratings for BEE mineral rights, and ITQs for fishing.

The 2010 National Growth Path (NGP) aims to create 5 million jobs by 2020 and the 2011 Green Economy Accord seeks to do this through creating green jobs.<sup>36</sup> The Accord has identified the following as vital areas to focus on: the rollout of renewable energy; biofuels for cars; clean coal; waste recycling; retrofitting of buildings; improving mass transport; electrification of poor communities; localisation for job creation; support for COP and its processes and agreements; and implementing an adaptation fund.<sup>37</sup>

As early as 2006, the government put forward processes toward facilitating market-based instruments with regards to climate. Market-based instruments and mechanisms to address the climate change crisis are in many ways an extension of the government's approach to land, minerals and metals and fish; they are reflections of the government's deeply held conception of nature as mainly an economic end, as I argued in the preceding chapters. Buying and selling climate space, neutralising climate as scientific and as an object, enables the rationalisation of the commodification of clean or dirty air. Hence, after the draft of the “Environmental Fiscal Reform Policy Paper,” government soon introduced measures such as levies for

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<sup>36</sup> Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Framework” (Pretoria: Economic Development Department, 2011), 25, accessed 2014, <http://www.economic.gov.za/communications/publications/new-growth-path-series>; Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Accord 4: Green Economy Accord” (Pretoria: Economic Development Department, 2011), accessed 2014, <http://www.economic.gov.za/communications/publications/green-economy-accord>.

<sup>37</sup> Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Accord 4: Green Economy Accord,” 9.

electricity generation, motorcar emissions, incandescent light bulbs, along with tax measures to incentivise renewable electricity generation and biofuels production.<sup>38</sup> In addition, it made investments in the management of biodiversity conservation as detailed below.

Towards the end of 2010, the paper on “Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The Carbon Tax Option” was published for discussion, outlining various policy options for carbon taxes. According to the government, it “recognises the important role for market-based instruments that create fiscal incentives and disincentives ... Thus, South Africa will employ market-based instruments as part of a suite of policy interventions to support the transition to a lower carbon economy.”<sup>39</sup> It is the perspective of the government that

[t]hese instruments will be designed to incentivise behaviour change at the individual, institutional and macro-economic levels for a climate-resilient South Africa contributing to a diversification of our energy mix, drive people to implement far-reaching energy efficiency measures, achieve passenger modal shifts, and generate investments in new and cleaner technologies and industries.<sup>40</sup>

The legacy of Hardin’s tragedy of the commons perspective and the logic of efficiency, as outlined in Chapter 2, is evident in the government’s approach above.

Government’s approach ties in directly with South African trade policy objectives that seek “radical economic transformation” through “accelerated industrialisation and localisation.”<sup>41</sup> This is an indication of the ANC-led government’s perspective of what they define as radical and transformative. Much of this is premised on the idea that the role of government is to facilitate, incentivise and regulate business.<sup>42</sup> Industry and business is the vehicle; capital the engine of

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<sup>38</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “National Climate Change Response White Paper” (Pretoria: Department of Environmental Affairs, 2011), 20-21. For a detailed overview of incentives see the Republic of South Africa’s “A Framework for Considering Market-Based Instruments to Support Environmental Fiscal Reform in South Africa” (Pretoria: National Treasury, 2006), 86.

<sup>39</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “National Climate Change Response White Paper” 20-21, 42, accessed October 25, 2016, [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national\\_climatechange\\_response\\_whitepaper.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national_climatechange_response_whitepaper.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “National Climate Change Response White Paper,” 42.

<sup>41</sup> Xolelwa Mlumbi-Peter, “South Africa’s Trade and Investment Policy” (presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry, July 22, 2015), accessed August 11, 2016, [http://www.dti.gov.za/parliament/2015/SA\\_Trade\\_Investment\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.za/parliament/2015/SA_Trade_Investment_Policy.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Accord 4: Green Economy Accord,” 8.

transformation.<sup>43</sup> According to government it “has a key role to play in fostering green industrial development, using existing and new tools and incentives.”<sup>44</sup> The Accord adds that “South Africa has a productive innovation sector... However, bringing these state of the art technologies to market requires capital and provides significant investment opportunities. These are some of the areas of the Green Economy that are open to rapid development and investment.”<sup>45</sup> Business supports the Accord and upon signing it, Futhi Mtoba said that “[b]usiness is engaged in a number of activities that will contribute to the successful implementation of a Green Economy Strategy.”<sup>46</sup>

Production and growth remain the drivers of South African trade policy. The NGP underscores that five trade-offs are required: present consumption and future growth; new industry and innovation; substantial risk; and currency competitiveness.<sup>47</sup> The fifth trade-off, according to NGP is “[b]etween the present costs and future benefits of a green economy.”<sup>48</sup>

What is understood as “present costs” is unclear. Government, however, sees jobs as the key driver for the future and is “[t]argeting more labour-absorbing activities across the main economic sectors – the agricultural and mining value chains, manufacturing and services.”<sup>49</sup> It is safe to assume that re-industrialisation is based on mitigating emissions for today, whilst seeking to “take advantage of new opportunities in the knowledge and green economies” for tomorrow.<sup>50</sup> Although the government recognises its huge carbon footprint it argues that in Africa there are “[e]normous reserves of raw materials and 60% of unused arable agricultural land globally.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, South Africa can pass on the ecological fallout to another country and its people in Africa, for a price. In the same way, well-off South Africans can have a non-stop supply of energy in the urban areas whilst externalising the destructive costs upon a mining-affected community where coal is being mined.

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<sup>43</sup> The Accord asks for business to commit to the plan.

<sup>44</sup> Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Framework,” 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Mlumbi-Peter, Department of Trade and Industry, “South Africa’s Trade and Investment Policy.”



The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) continues to identify mining and agricultural extraction as growth and development areas for trade at national and continental levels. It seeks to grow the South African economic market and footprint in the region and beyond. The NGP argues that “[a] zero-sum conflict over existing resources and jobs will not provide South Africa with a unifying vision.”<sup>52</sup> Instead according to the NGP “[w]e need to grow both the size of the economy and the number of decent work opportunities it provides.”<sup>53</sup>

The South African government’s trade policy as well as its macro-economic policy aim to mainstream green policy, but remain committed to the logic of efficiency.<sup>54</sup> The government’s approach set out above, assumes that the country needs to grow, consume, work, exploit and profiteer more, instead of conceding redistribution of the abundance equitably, acting with more constraint and mindfulness and recognising all the unpaid work that significantly subsidises production. Although the NGP mentions decent work, the government seems reluctant to engage meaningfully with, or support calls for decent wages or a living wage, let alone a national minimal wage.<sup>55</sup>

The most glaring challenge of the New Growth Plan is that it appears that the fundamentals are business as usual, a continuation of an extractivist model combined with a new preoccupation with the green technology revolution and transfer and a “flurry of green capitalism.” This neatly connects with the ANC-led government’s COP position. It saw the Paris agreement as a success and took the lead in the Marrakesh process, championing market-based instruments to address climate change.<sup>56</sup>

#### **6.4 Papering over the contradictions**

According to government, “[t]he nature of the climate change challenge is one characterised by the overuse of a global commons in an unequal world.”<sup>57</sup> It therefore

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<sup>52</sup> Economic Development Department, “The New Growth Path: Framework,” 37.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> The logic of efficiency, as outlined and critiqued by Thomas Princen (discussed in depth in Chapter 2) is the antithesis of putting the brakes on the ecological crisis.

<sup>55</sup> For a recent overview on this discussion in South Africa see Eddie Cottle, *Towards a South African National Minimum Wage* (Cape Town: LRS, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Summary of the South Africa’s position at COP21-CMP 11 in Paris, France,” accessed Oct 18, 2016, [https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11\\_climatechange\\_paris\\_position](https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/cop21cmp11_climatechange_paris_position).

<sup>57</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Discussion Document: South Africa’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC): 1 August 2015,” 3.

argues for “fair, effective and binding multilateral agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol at COP 21 and CMP 11 in Paris ... [guided by] the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities [which] must apply operationally to any Agreement under the Convention.”<sup>58</sup> And yet, government’s national position is narrowly focused on issues of capacity building, transparency, the green fund, commitments that rules are agreed upon by 2020, further financing for adaptation and institutional governance.<sup>59</sup>

Considering government policy and reports, there appears to be no further analysis of the “overuse of the global commons,” except that some use them more, and disproportionately, and this unfairly limits equitable use. How the global commons are used and to what end is not part of the discussion and analysis, nor is there an examination of how we conceive of the global commons. This analytical shortcoming of how and to what extent the global commons are used in the case of South Africa was demonstrated in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The chapters brought to the fore respectively, how land, minerals and metals, and fish are used and to what end, as a result of an inherited and unexamined conception of nature.

In Chapter 3, I argued that when land was separated from people, it was no longer solely used for cultivation, feeding, well-being and community. Instead, land as private property permits land use for any end, but tends to favour use related to private profit. I argued that the economic surplus value of land, which occurred with private property when economic gains trump ecological balance, breaks the ecological sustainability of the land. In Chapter 4, I argued that when minerals and metals are objectified, it is easy to prioritise the economic gains of mining above the way and extent we use the products of mining. In Chapter 5, I argued that when fish is transformed into mainly a commodity through industrialisation, the logics of profits outweigh fish as life.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>59</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Minister Edna Molewa’s speech.”

According to Edna Molewa, “[a]s concerns for the environment grow, there is a shift globally towards green, climate resilient and low carbon development policies and pathways.”<sup>60</sup> In accordance with this shift she outlines that

[o]ur Green Economy Strategy has eight key pillars, namely: green buildings and the built environment; sustainable transport and infrastructure; clean energy and energy efficiency; natural resource conservation and management; sustainable waste management; water management; sustainable consumption and production and agriculture food production and forestry.<sup>61</sup>

It would seem, as shown in Chapter 4, that by the term “sustainable” Molewa means a balance between social, political and economic arguments. Yet, with the predictable prioritising of the economic argument, based on its assumption that economic growth will render jobs and a “better life for all,” then the only element of green in the Green Economy Strategy is the zooming in on the environment as the new market.

Molewa argues that “[r]educing, recovering or minimising waste provides opportunities for socio-economic development; new jobs and businesses; maximising resource recovery for downstream manufacturing growth and reducing reliance on declining natural resources.”<sup>62</sup> This focus on waste-recycling is aligned to economic growth and job creation gains. There is a cost-benefit approach where costs of environmental harm are outweighed by benefits measured by increasing GDP and job creation premised on opportunities presented by greening the economy. The perspective constantly seeks to appease an economic rationale and the logic of efficiency, consumption, production and growth. This is affirmed as the “rational” choice.

In Chapter 5, I argued the same point by showing how government intends to grow the aquaculture market. Government’s approach is not about doing the right or best thing given the ecological crisis or ecological injustices. As argued in Chapter 2, the consequences and implications that accompany the logic of efficiency are in conflict with an ecologically and socially just society.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Minister Edna Molewa tables Department of Environmental Affairs 2015/2016 Budget Vote policy statement,” accessed November 1, 2016, [https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa\\_2015-16\\_budgetvote\\_policystatement](https://www.environment.gov.za/speech/molewa_2015-16_budgetvote_policystatement).

<sup>61</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Minister Edna Molewa tables ...”

<sup>62</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Minister Edna Molewa tables ...”

<sup>63</sup> Refer to Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Another key area of state intervention has to do with nature conservation and biodiversity.<sup>64</sup> An element of the government's response to climate change, is to direct resources into "biodiversity asset management" as a component of its adaptation plan as outlined in its National Climate Change Response policy. Elements of the plan include assessment, research, enhancing effective management, curbing invasive and alien species and expanding protected area networks.<sup>65</sup> The approach to sustainability is driven by developing a green economy so as to increase revenue streams, jobs and income generation linked to ecotourism. Asset management of biodiversity is aimed at expanding gene banks, conservation efforts and protected areas as well as enhancing forecasting of natural resource assets and liabilities.<sup>66</sup>

According to Molewa, "our very success in conserving South Africa's biodiversity, has turned us into a target for unscrupulous operators involved in organized, transnational environmental and wildlife crime."<sup>67</sup> The speech, tabled in parliament, stated that "[w]hether it is illegal logging or fishing, species smuggling, the dumping of toxic and hazardous waste, or wildlife poaching – environmental crime is often tied to other forms of criminal activity."<sup>68</sup>

Significant resources have gone into crime prevention at this level, and when reported this is always discussed in light of revenue lost. There is no evidence of discussions by Molewa regarding her criminalisation of small-scale farmers, artisanal miners or fisher folk who attempt to reclaim access after they are robbed of their access to the commons through state imposed enclosures and sale of private property.

Green states, according to Death, are "states in which the governance of environmental issues has become central and is closely linked to core imperatives of survival, maintenance of domestic order, generation of finance, capital accumulation and political legitimation."<sup>69</sup> He argues that Green States exist in Africa and have been integral to a modernisation strategy despite the argument that it is primarily a

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<sup>64</sup> South Africa had a Biodiversity Act and institutions in place.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, Change Response White Paper," (Pretoria: Department of Environment Affairs, 2011) 20-21, accessed October 25, 2016, [https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national\\_climatechange\\_response\\_whitepaper.pdf](https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/national_climatechange_response_whitepaper.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, "National Climate Change Response White Paper," 21.

<sup>67</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, "Minister Edna Molewa tables ..."

<sup>68</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, "Minister Edna Molewa tables ..."

<sup>69</sup> Carl Death, "Green States in Africa: Beyond the Usual Suspects," *Environmental Politics* 25 (2016): 116, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1074380>.

phenomenon of states in the North.<sup>70</sup> He identifies South Africa as such a state on the basis of rhetoric, rather than reality.

According to Beinart “at various moments in the twentieth century the South African state enacted far-reaching measures for environmental regulation, and initiated propaganda drives to encourage conservation, in the process spending millions of pounds and passing wide-ranging laws.”<sup>71</sup> Death asks “[w]hat else are vaccination campaigns (for livestock and humans), the creation and management of biodiversity enclaves, urban sanitation reforms, programmes to eliminate alien invasive species, anti-poaching drives, and wildlife conservation if not ‘a form of politics entailing the administration of the processes of life of populations’” but environmental regulation?<sup>72</sup>

The state economic-environmental approach is reflected in how it thinks about biodiversity. According to Minister Molewa, “[w]ithout our richly endowed ecosystem services, natural resources and biodiversity base – there would be limited water, jobs, food, shelter, fuel, and medicine – not to mention the damage to key economic sectors like energy, agriculture and tourism.”<sup>73</sup> This worldview holds that biodiversity’s function and purpose is to sustain humans and economic imperatives. This is in keeping with the Scientific Revolution’s emphasis on “the hegemony of mechanistic science as a marker of progress” and requires human domination of nature.<sup>74</sup>

I argue that this worldview inherited from Western modernity continues to permeate, and is reflected within, the South African government’s policy and approach to climate change, as outlined above. The South African state fosters the idea that it can oversee a balance between environment harm and economic growth. It is clear that the state recognises the contradictions, but papers over them and advances a macro-economic policy that is dependent on resource extraction and capital accumulation that externalises the fallout.

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<sup>70</sup> Death, “Green States in Africa,” 123 – 125.

<sup>71</sup> William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 380.

<sup>72</sup> Death, “Green States in Africa,” 123.

<sup>73</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs, “Molewa’s speech.”

<sup>74</sup> Merchant, “The Scientific Revolution,” 513.

## 6.5 Critiques of the ANC's neoliberal and ecological modernisation agenda

Government's economic development model and ecological modernisation agenda in South Africa are both contested. There is some continuity amongst socio-economic justice groups whose impetus stems from anti-globalisation and anti-privatisation mobilisation around water, energy, land, coasts and dams as well as anti-retroviral drugs and privatisation and commodification of goods and services at local, national, regional and continental levels. Groups such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM), the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and Jubilee2000 (an anti-debt movement), to mention a few, put forward a broadly anti-neoliberal analysis. Many groups emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a response to GEAR.

Patrick Bond offers a useful overview of the movements from below who are engaged in aspects of ecological critique. He names the new movement "climate justice," as, according to him, it "best fuses a variety of progressive political-economic and political-ecological currents to combat the most serious threat humanity and most other species face in the twenty-first century."<sup>75</sup> By sketching the global climate justice traditions, three parallels can be drawn to the South Africa landscape.<sup>76</sup> Firstly, a politics of anti-racist environmentalism is reflected in many of the anti-neoliberal organisations engaged in service delivery single issue-campaigns, and which begin to "link social justice to ecological problems."<sup>77</sup> Secondly, "late 1990s Jubilee movements against Northern financial domination of the South" and "the 2000s global justice movement" also find expression and have brought that critique to the ecological crisis.<sup>78</sup> Thirdly, "the Bolivian government-sponsored April 2010 Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba" resonated with three fronts in South Africa: with traditional middle-class environmental groups who are predominantly white—they have done much work to link Rights of Mother Earth to ideas of Ubuntu; with those who campaigned and mobilised around the no-to-commercialisation of water and were in solidarity with Bolivians against the Cochabamba Water Wars of 2000, calling for the end to ecological debt through the Jubilee South Campaign; and those in the land and seed

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<sup>75</sup> Patrick Bond, *Politics of Climate Justice: Paralysis Above, Movement Below* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012), 185.

<sup>76</sup> See Bond, *Politics of Climate Justice*, 187.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

movement, who have moved beyond land as cultural and sacred and inserted a strong class and race dimension into the analysis.<sup>79</sup>

Of equal significance, Bond argues that “when fused as climate justice and when transcending ‘not in my back yard’ sentiments, these interrelated and often overlapping (although sometimes conflicting) traditions are mainly aimed at building mass-based popular movements, bringing together ‘green’ and ‘red’ politics.”<sup>80</sup> Importantly, he argues that this politics can only come together when “articulating not only the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also the need to transform our inherited systems of materials extraction, transport and distribution, energy-generation, production of goods and services, consumption, disposal and financing.”<sup>81</sup>

Organisations that emerged from 2008 on around single-issue campaigns have grown and expanded into work on food sovereignty campaigns, climate change, fisher folk, small-scale farmers and cooperatives, seeds and GMOs, as well as on issues related to extractives and waste pickers. More recently, they have formed broader platforms and alliances. Some of the organisations and movements mentioned in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are central to building the new alliances. Campaigns such as One Million Climate Jobs, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and popular organisations such as Mining-affected Communities Affected in Action (MACUA), Southern African Rural Women’s Assembly (RWA), Inyanda, Women and Mining (WoMin), Masifundise and Beyond Coal converge to bring local and national issues to the fore. As noted by Death, “[i]ssues related to land, food, and agriculture remain important concerns for environmental activists in movements over food sovereignty, genetically modified crops, land rights, deforestation, and consumption.”<sup>82</sup>

With the build-up towards COP17 in Durban, South African community socio-economic environmental justice groups or national environmental groups, which have a history prior to more popular campaigns on climate change—such as GroundWork, the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance, Highveld Environmental Justice Network, Earthlife, Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth South Africa—developed broader platforms and campaigns. Traditional environmental and trade policy NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF),

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>82</sup> Death, “Green States in Africa,” 126.

Biowatch, the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG), Earthlife Africa (ELA), the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Greenpeace and the Economic Justice Network (EJN) joined broad alliances.

The politics of socio-economic-ecological justice is waged on multiple fronts and opposes government's neoliberal ecological modernisation project at the level of analysis, critique and organisation. The first stake was at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), where protestors marched from Alexandra township to Sandton City under the banner of the Social Movement Indaba and the Anti-Privatisation Forum. The march was between 20 000 and 25 000 people strong and it exposed the pro-capitalist agenda of the WSSD. This process developed alternatives, organisation and resistance to confront the onslaught of neoliberal ecological modernisation. The second stake was COP17 where united efforts around climate change converged around the "Million Climate Jobs Campaign: to a just low carbon transition to combat unemployment and climate change."<sup>83</sup> This campaign has been able to bring many groups together.

In 2012, the Marikana Solidarity Campaign fostered and saw the convergence of many groups nationally. The Bench Marks Foundation and MACUA were instrumental in bringing to the fore the ecological and social destruction of mining within mining-affected communities. Through Marikana and the solidarity campaign, many mining-affected communities soon made national and provincial links.

Not all groups working on climate participate in and join the broader socio-economic-ecological spaces. Some research-based environmental organisations tend to focus on mitigation and adaptation and often those who are based in academia such as the Climate Systems Analyst Group and African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI) focus on technological solutions, quantify the impacts of climate change and embark on modelling and forecasting. They tend to produce high-level reports and work at the national and international policy level. These centres aim to influence research agendas and policy, they are well funded and in most instances connected with expert groups on an international level. These centres do not aim to undermine the status quo and see themselves as contributing to "rational" scientific knowledge.

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<sup>83</sup> See AIDC, "One Million Climate Jobs Campaign," <http://aidc.org.za/programmes/million-climate-jobs-campaign/about/>.



Others, like the Sustainability Institute (SI), seek to develop proposals and tangible alternatives for a just transition and offer a systems approach. Their philosophy runs towards “imagining just futures,” holding that “in our post-colonial and post-apartheid explorations means questioning continuously the traps of modern consumerism, isolation, dis-connect and destructive competition.”<sup>84</sup> They argue that “[b]ecoming indigenous in the 21st century is honouring and acknowledging fully our African heritages with all their complexities, and interrogating without fear the possibilities of different and more just futures.”<sup>85</sup>

Over the past few years, public interest law and human rights organisations such as the Centre for Applied Law (CALs), Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), Social Economic Rights Institute (SERI) and Legal Resource Centre (LRC) have taken on litigation work on behalf of communities. They use the constitution to defend the right to access clean, safe, adequate water, air and environment as well as to create a legal framework to protect the safety and health of communities affected adversely by environmental degradation.

These human rights groups use lobbying tactics, effective media strategies and campaigns to bring environmental violations and degradation effects into the public arena. They have started to look at issues of compliance. CER launched a 2016 report “Full Disclosure: The Truth about Corporate Compliance,” showing the effects of environmental impacts and lack of compliance.<sup>86</sup> This is necessary work, but it is not always clear if they are able to make visible the issues that are hidden within and beyond a human rights-based approach. Questions of regulations, compliance and improved governance of businesses and transnational corporations are not seeking to address the systemic ecological fallout of extractivist activities.

The NGOs working on environmental corporate governance, illicit tax flows and extractives (agriculture and minerals), such as the Economic Justice Network and Masifundise Development Trust, galvanise around campaigns on international “best

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<sup>84</sup> The Sustainability Institute, “Our Way,” accessed November 25, 2016, <http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.net/about/our-way>.

<sup>85</sup> The Sustainability Institute, “Our Way.”

<sup>86</sup> CER, “Full Disclosure: The Truth about Corporate Compliance,” accessed November 16, 2016, <http://fulldisclosure.cer.org.za/>.

practices,” “minimum standards,” voluntary guidelines and engagements.<sup>87</sup> We have seen this nationally and internationally with regard to fishing as well as with regard to mining extractives. A tension exists as some argue for immediate minimal victories and seek voluntary standards, while others, who struggle for larger reforms and protection, argue for binding treaties.<sup>88</sup> Others, still, do not want to engage with the official processes and are reticent about collaborating with the UN. There are numerous challenges with regard to best practices and minimum standards, as often these are based on a model of society where GDP growth and profit share prices are revered. The critique of this approach is brought to the fore by the South African Stop Corporate Impunity campaign, linked to broader global processes.

Defenders of Mother Earth argue for the rights of nature. These groups draw on experiences from Latin America and go beyond legal human rights and environmental groups. Joining international alliances, these groups advocate that Nature has rights and these rights should be reflected in countries’ constitutions. They draw on examples from the Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions.

According to Cormac Cullinan, “the Charter does not focus specifically on climate change and instead seeks to address the dysfunctional relationship between humans and Nature which drives the human behaviour that causes climate change, among many other symptoms.”<sup>89</sup> A key aspect of the charter is to foster the inalienable rights of nature. The charter argues that nature is sacred, that there is a need to live in harmony with nature and there is a “need to take decisive action to turn the course of our societies away from selfishness, greed, exploitation, and separateness.”<sup>90</sup>

Critical analyses of the government’s conservation approach - linked to eco-tourism as a central aspect of its green agenda - expose how important it is to not be steered by government or funders to only focus on its climate change policy propaganda. Maano Ramutsindela levels an important critique on three fronts, tied to

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<sup>87</sup> See for instance Economic Justice Network around the Alternative Mining Indaba; also Masifundise Development Trust and Coastal Links on campaigning for and developing Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security,” (Rome: FAO, 2012), accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> See the United Nation, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: “Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework vs Binding Treaty.” The governments of Ecuador and South Africa are the states that initiated this lobby.

<sup>89</sup> Cormac Cullinan, Commentary on “Peoples Charter for Africa,” accessed October 29, 2013, <http://therightsofnature.org/the-peoples-charter-for-africa/>.

<sup>90</sup> Cullinan, Commentary on “Peoples Charter for Africa.”

a broader critique of the government's ecological modernisation perspective. Firstly, conservation philanthropy is deeply extractivist and the private sector "sees conservation areas as a niche market for capital accumulation, with companies in particular using it to develop their competitive advantage."<sup>91</sup> This echoes the argument I made in Chapter 4 regarding mining and government's bent on minerals and minerals as the country's comparative advantage. Secondly, to understand "how labour is involved in producing conservation goods and services" and specifically to recognise that "land use change from both subsistence and commercial agriculture entails a significant shift in the use of labour."<sup>92</sup> In Chapter 3, I argued that work on the land transformed dramatically from collective, shared and communal to labour bought, privately sold and individualised. Thirdly, that private conservation is about the protection of private property at the expense of land restoration.<sup>93</sup> Hence, Ramutsindela affirms my argument in Chapter 3 that private property is a cornerstone of a capitalist conception of nature and that it undermines racial redress and land restoration.

Ramutsindela argues that "private nature reserves use environmental philanthropy to achieve three interrelated objectives: to push back land claims, to give wealth-generating activities a human face, and to control a labour pool for purposes of upmarket ecotourism ventures."<sup>94</sup> Environmental philanthropy is undoubtedly linked to similar assumptions as those underpinning ecological modernisation and assumes that the conflict between economic profits can be balanced with environmental damage prevention. According to Ramutsindela, "reserves are involved in business ventures where both conservation and profit-making intersect."<sup>95</sup>

Ramutsindela's perspective is in sharp contrast to government's argument that eco-tourism ensures ecological balance, revenue and jobs. This form of eco-tourism is aligned to an ecological modernisation approach regardless of the type of jobs, quality of livelihood improvements, or costs of going green. According to Ramutsindela, "[p]hilanthropy is extractive both materially and discursively, and its extractive nature is laid bare when altruism is overtaken by political and economic interests. Materially

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<sup>91</sup> Maano Ramutsindela, "Extractive Philanthropy: Securing Labour and Land Claim Settlements in Private Nature Reserves," *Third World Quarterly* 36 (2015): 2260, accessed September 7, 2016, doi: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1068112.

<sup>92</sup> Ramutsindela, "Extractive Philanthropy," 2260.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 2266.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 2260.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 2262.

business exploits labour for profit maximisation but then use[s] philanthropy to address the social ills created by the business enterprise. This makes philanthropy part of the process of labour exploitation.”<sup>96</sup> The particular conception of nature becomes apparent when the agenda of capital accumulation is exposed. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I argued that the exploitation of nature through a focus on land, minerals and metals and fish occurs simultaneously with the exploitation of labour, paid or unpaid.

## **6.6 No to extractivism: emergence of an alternative modernity?**

A call for mining to stop and for no new mining is a challenge to the government, mining companies and traditional authorities’ current ecological approach and industrialisation efforts in South Africa. But these calls likewise challenge ecological modernisation opponents and critics. These defiant calls are slowly mounting, demanding an interrogation of inherited assumptions, conceptions and practices with regards to nature and extraction and what has come to be understood as normal.

In Chapter 4, I traced the history of mining and its socio-economic impacts and argued that ecological devastation is a central feature of the model of extractivism. I exposed the deeply entrenched assumptions and conceptions of mining, which are tied up with industrialisation, development, progress and modernity and reflected in government policy. In so doing, Chapter 4 argued that conceiving of mining as normal, permits the externalisation of costs and burdens onto mining-affected communities. I argued that making mining normal means normalising the exploitation of nature and labour, both paid and unpaid, simultaneously. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 argued that the mechanistic worldview of the domination and control over nature bound up with ideas of “modernity,” “progress,” and “development,” inherited from the Scientific Revolution need to be made visible and examined, given the ecological crisis. The Amadiba community saying “no to mining” makes this process of examination concrete and immediate.

The Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) states that “[f]or ten years we have said no to mining, whatever colour it takes. It does not matter even if you bring your ‘Blacks’. Our land is not for sale! We want to develop our agriculture and tourism.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 2261.

Your mining is not development. It is destruction of our land. It is killings and violence, no matter if it is black or white.”<sup>97</sup>

This resistance and absolute refusal to allow mining operations to commence hinges upon the Amadiba’s community organisation, mobilisation and determination to fight against a process, which they argue, will undermine and destroy their way of life. They are adamant that their ability to maintain autonomy, feed and care for themselves will be obliterated and that their relationships to one another and nature will be destroyed.

What are the promises and limitations of the ACC’s call for “no to mining” of titanium in Pondoland by Australian-owned Mineral Resource Commodities (MRC) and Transworld Energy (TEM)? To answer this question—central to this dissertation—we need to ask how the ACC imagines their society, but also opens possibilities for how to reimagine society at large.

ACC’s call for “no to mining,” is revealing for numerous reasons. First, the ACC are clear that mining is not going to deliver the development they want, nor are they under any illusions of the promise that mining allegedly holds. They understand the destruction that mining brings and will not be pressured or bullied by the mining companies, or the “rational talk” of scientists, experts or government officials and the like. They reject carrying the costs and burdens of mining-for-capitalist-development and they are not convinced by arguments for sustainable mining.

In 2007, Patrick Caruso, the brother of the CEO of the Australian mining company, said “there is always blood where there are these types of projects (mining) and in my experience, you cannot have development without blood.”<sup>98</sup> Caruso exposes the acceptance of the costs that mining companies concede as inherent to mining development. Who primarily benefits from this type of development and bloodshed? Chapter 4 shows clearly that it is rarely the mining-affected communities who benefit.

In 2016, after the brutal assassination of the chairperson of the ACC, Sikhosiphi Bazooka Rhadebe, a memorandum to the Australian High Commissioner was released. The memorandum stated that communities in South Africa have the right to

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<sup>97</sup> Amadiba Crisis Committee, “MRC ‘disinvests’, but now tell us: WHO IS TRULY BEHIND THE ‘XOLOBENI PROJECT?’” press statement July 18, 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Bench Marks Foundation, “Respect communities’ right to say No,” press statement 14 April 2016, accessed at June 9, 2016, [http://www.bench-marks.org.za/press/picketing\\_at\\_australian\\_high\\_commission.pdf](http://www.bench-marks.org.za/press/picketing_at_australian_high_commission.pdf).

say “no to mining and to decide on its own development,” and that they “must be respected and all intimidation stopped.”<sup>99</sup> The memo highlighted that “[a]lready five major activists in this area have died over the last eight years for their right to say no. How many more people must die before something is done?”<sup>100</sup> The memorandum by Bench Marks Foundation affirms the ACC’s position on the right to say no to mining.

Second, the ACC argues that mining will cause the destruction of their land. Land is integral to their lives, and the members of the ACC are determined to defend their land. Often when the ACC members raise their concerns about their land, they not only raise its cultural heritage and ancestral connections, but also articulate a deep sense of themselves as one with the land.<sup>101</sup> The ACC refers to a deep reciprocity between the care of the land and its care for the community.

This suggests another type of relationship with the land than the dominant or legislated one of land as private property, as I outlined in Chapter 3. Xolobeni in Pondoland is not private property and the Amadiba community are not separated from their land. Could a reimagined and new lived relationship (beyond the cultural and ancestral connection) with each other and land be drawn from the ACC’s campaigning? Is their relationship to the land a reflection of their relationships with one another?

Third, the government and mining companies instigate and use violence and conflict to displace communities to gain access to land, minerals and metals. Since 2007, prospecting in the Xolobeni area has been the cause of great tension within the community as well as between the community, government and mining companies. These various conflicts have left the Amadiba community on constant high alert. The community is not prepared to acquiesce their claim to a different life envisaged by the government through mining-for-development.

Fourth, the government completely disregards the views of the community and has little interest in seeking consent for mining when handing out mining rights.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Bench Marks Foundation, “Respect communities’ right to say No.”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> At the Alternative Mining Indaba in 2015, as well as at the Tribunal in the same year, ACC testimony constantly made reference to their relationship of reciprocity with the land and spoke of a relationship to the land based on respect and community.

<sup>102</sup> At the time of writing the mining company indicated they had no intention to honour the 18-month moratorium. The ACC argued that “DMR’s tactics precipitates violence directed against our community.” The ACC statement highlighted that “DMR has 1400 pages to read about why TEM’s mining application should be rejected and mining never be allowed on the Wild Coast. The right for our community to stop mining on our land will soon be

Government assumes neither the function of protector of capital interests, nor that of guardian of its people, land and minerals. Mining companies and foreign direct investment (FDI) appear to have legal rights that supersede citizen's constitutional protections. For the ACC, the community, people and land are paramount. Government siding with both the national and international mining companies shows clearly where its allegiance lies.

Fifth, it is immaterial who the owner of the mining company is – black or white, national or transnational. It makes no difference to the ACC. The government, however, tends to favour BEE and local content for mining, as reflected in its policy and Mining Charter. It has a constant rhetoric of encouraging black accumulation in the mineral and metals sector.

Sixth, *no to mining* suggests that the members of the ACC are not interested in the jobs that mining creates and type of work that it generates. They do not see this type of work as fit for humans. However, they argue they should not be denied their constitutional right to access running water, electricity, education and health care, as promised by the democratic government. The ACC does not regard the situation as either/or. Instead, it argues for an alternative that does not destroy land, or the community's relationships with the land and one another.

Seventh, the ACC members insist they must be central to discussions that determine what happens to them. They cannot be excluded from decisions that impact where and how they live. This is a direct challenge to externalising the costs of mining. The ACC insistence that it will not tolerate any ecological destruction offers us an opportunity to fully review, and pose critical questions about, mining-for-development. It makes visible the development model that mining implies and exposes the government's approach to economic development. The ACC argues that if mining has been the backbone of the economy and wealth generation for decades, then where is the alleged development of electrical and telephone lines, decent work, free quality education and health etc., that were promised with mining-for-development for all South Africans?

The resistance of the ACC, and many others across the world, who are united under the "Yes to life, No to mining" movement, raises critical questions about the

costs of the mining-for-development paradigm and who benefits.<sup>103</sup> Mining extraction takes place deep below the earth or through open cast mines, but at a distance from urban centres where water, roads, electricity, health care, education, connectivity, etc., are potentially easily accessible. The extraction takes place in remote areas, far from sight. Those who work in the mines and who subsidise the mines are often invisible, disposable and replaceable. “They” are easily written off when “they” are not near, connected and visible.<sup>104</sup>

Making visible the defiance against mining-for-development through capitalist exploitation, by concretely giving a name and place to it, makes it hard to mute the voices. The insinuation that those in rural areas are uneducated, traditional, not forward thinking, opposed to progress and uncivilised, is deeply linked to conceptions of modernity and the propaganda of progressivism and particular assumptions of Western civilisation.

Although neglected by the propaganda of progressivism, the alternative modernity as presented by the ACC is collective, communal, land and often food sufficient, carbon light and consumes far less. What is regarded as modern is presented as “rational,” urban, educated, intelligent, secular, non-traditional, pro-industrialisation and mining-for-capitalist-development. This conception of modernity is also highly consumptive, wasteful, technologically dependent, energy demanding, carbon heavy, individualistic and competitive. It is based, as pointed out in Chapter 2 and argued in Chapter 5, on the logic of efficiency and not the logic of sufficiency.

Princen’s articulation of the logic of sufficiency, as discussed in Chapter 2, is in essence to recognise the current ecological crisis and constraints and heed the idea and practice that “enough is as good as a feast.” He reminds us that too much is undesirable and means not enough for others most of the time. He argues that we do not require so much, and for all of the time. He suggests that is the wrong standard of human flourishing. According to Princen “the challenge will be *living well by living well within our means*.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See David Hallows and Victor Munnik, “The Destruction of the Highveld Part 1: Digging Coal” (South Africa: GroundWork, 2016), accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.groundwork.org.za/reports/gWReport%202016.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> This is my observation from having visited various coal mine-affected communities in South Africa in 2014 and 2015.

<sup>105</sup> Princen, *Treading Softly*, 2, original emphasis.



According to Neville Alexander, “[t]oday, we know that political diversity is as important for a humane society as are bio- and cultural diversity. For some years now, it has dawned on me that a humanism of the 21st century will have to be based on what Gorz calls the principle of sufficiency, which, for the sake of a broader understanding of what this concept entails, I have transliterated as ‘Enough is as good as a feast.’”<sup>106</sup> Alexander puts forward that “[i]t ought to be obvious that if the structures and processes of modern industrial societies were informed and shaped by this view of life, most of the currently existing social modalities and human desires and activities in most contemporary states would forthwith become antiquated and counterproductive.”<sup>107</sup>

The ACC members want alternatives to mining-for-capitalist development, which are not in conflict with how they wish to live in Xolobeni. Specifically, they seek alternatives that honour their alternative relationship with and dependence on the land. They seek alternatives that respect what they value, and that recognise what is important for community, solidarity and ecological balance. Any employment fostered must not create conflict, nor should it undermine the voices of the community or the close-knit relationships within the community.

The ACC is insistent that mining extractivism will destroy their ecosystem and relationship with one another and the land.<sup>108</sup> The ACC has made numerous exchanges with other areas in the country and the world where mining has occurred and they are adamant that they do not want capitalist development, destruction and socio-economic inequality in their community, as well as the high levels of ill-health and toxicity that comes with mining.

The ACC is not resisting modernity. It is suggesting an alternative modernity. The ACC is constantly confronted with questions about what that means and it would look like. They are expected to have answers, and many who are in solidarity try to suggest alternatives and offer support. This is important, but it seems equally important to note the dangers this could represent for the ACC. The vocabulary, frameworks and worldviews that external organisations bring could do an injustice to the ACC, but also give them strength. To draw upon a vocabulary of the sacred,

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<sup>106</sup> Neville Alexander, “Let Us Return to the Source,” in *Enough Is as Good as a Feast* (Braamfontein: HSRC, 2012), 63, accessed July 2013, <http://www.fhr.org.za/files/7713/8020/3210/NABookLow-res-Inside.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> Alexander, “Let Us Return to the Source,” 63.

<sup>108</sup> Alternative Mining Indaba, 2015, 2016, 2017.

cultural, indigenous and customary rights of the earth is to extend towards conceptions of pre-modernity on the one hand but also the exceptionalism of this particular case. The ACC is saying no to mining, but should it be supported only because of the beauty of the area and the pristine landscape? Should their call for self-autonomy and self-determination not suffice?

The pressure to have answers places a burden on the ACC. Yet, their daily resistance is part of an alternative. To defend against daily external attacks and maintain this resistance for ten years has shaped the alternatives. This continued commitment reflects a deep collective understanding by the community of what they want. It is through this process that a new relationship between nature and society can be formed.

The solidarity from beyond the ACC is important and should amplify this resistance. The ACC should propel onlookers to build in their own locations and organisations further resistance against pro-capitalist development models. Together, by saying no, they could bring an end to the mantra that there-is-no-alternative.

Recently, the ACC suggested eco-tourism and agriculture based on an holistic approach, fostered and regulated by their consent, as an element of building an alternative. The ACC is not arguing for the eco-tourism being peddled by the government in its Green Accord. They have rejected and resisted the construction of a highway and bridge that the government has promoted for eco-tourism, so it is clear they are not suggesting an eco-tourism model based on capitalist profit. The ACC might be proposing locally controlled and directed work of the landscape they live in. It is unclear, but again, the dangers of external pressure to show the alternative or adopt a vocabulary that is not theirs, is necessary to flag. The worldview that capitalist work and money are defining features of modernity and are necessary for development needs to be interrogated. Do the people of the Amadiba community not work every day to care for themselves and live in balance with the landscape they inhabit?

In many ways, the ACC affirms Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's subsistence framework as part of an alternative.<sup>109</sup> Broadly, Mies' and Shiva's analysis challenges a mining-for-capitalist development; or agriculture-for-capitalist development; or fishing-for-capitalist development paradigm, as fostered by the South African policy

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<sup>109</sup> Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (Halifax: Zed Books, 1993), 297 – 322.

on land, mining and fishing. Their analysis arises from a critique of the separation of nature and society, which arose from the Scientific Revolution, the subsequent alienating social relations as well as the process of capitalist and patriarchal accumulation.

I will briefly mention five of their ten elements. They argue that: one, “economic activity is not to produce an ever-growing mountain of commodities and money for anonymous markets but for the creation of life – the satisfaction of fundamental human needs.”<sup>110</sup> Two, subsistence is based on [a] “new relationship with nature and among people, where the division of labour – man-woman; manual-mental; urban-rural” is undone. They propose to replace it instead with “principles of reciprocity, mutuality, solidarity, reliability, sharing, caring, respect (for individual and responsibility for the ‘whole’), subsistence, security-reliance on community (not bank accounts or state).”<sup>111</sup> Three, “participatory processes and grassroots democracy” are essential elements for a substance perspective.<sup>112</sup> This means that people should not be bullied into decisions or ignored, but that their consent is required. Four, divisions between “politics-economics; public-private” should be abolished and people should live the “personal is political.”<sup>113</sup> Lastly, people should “resist all forms of further privatisation and commercialisation of commons.”<sup>114</sup>

The ACC resistance is a challenge to business as usual where government hands out mining rights and mining companies prospect and extract. For the critics, it challenges reformist approaches that tinker with compliance, taxes and environmental standards to improve business. For those who see the resistance as articulations towards a different society, it challenges any one-size fits all alternative. Of importance, their resistance compels deep reflection and analysis of long-held assumptions and unexamined conceptions of nature. It enlivens discussions and opens new possibilities.

Resistance against mining is being led by the communities and the prominence of women in this struggle is telling; it is as if 500 years later, they are responding to Francis Bacon’s masculine extractivism, determined to fight back and make themselves and nature visible as they reclaim and redefine social relations within

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<sup>110</sup> Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, 319.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, 319.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 320.

society. Many women are done with bearing the burden, acting as shock absorbers, mothering and nurturing to subsidise an unequal, oppressive and exploitative system. A new alliance has emerged making visible the inextricable links between women and nature's emancipation.

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